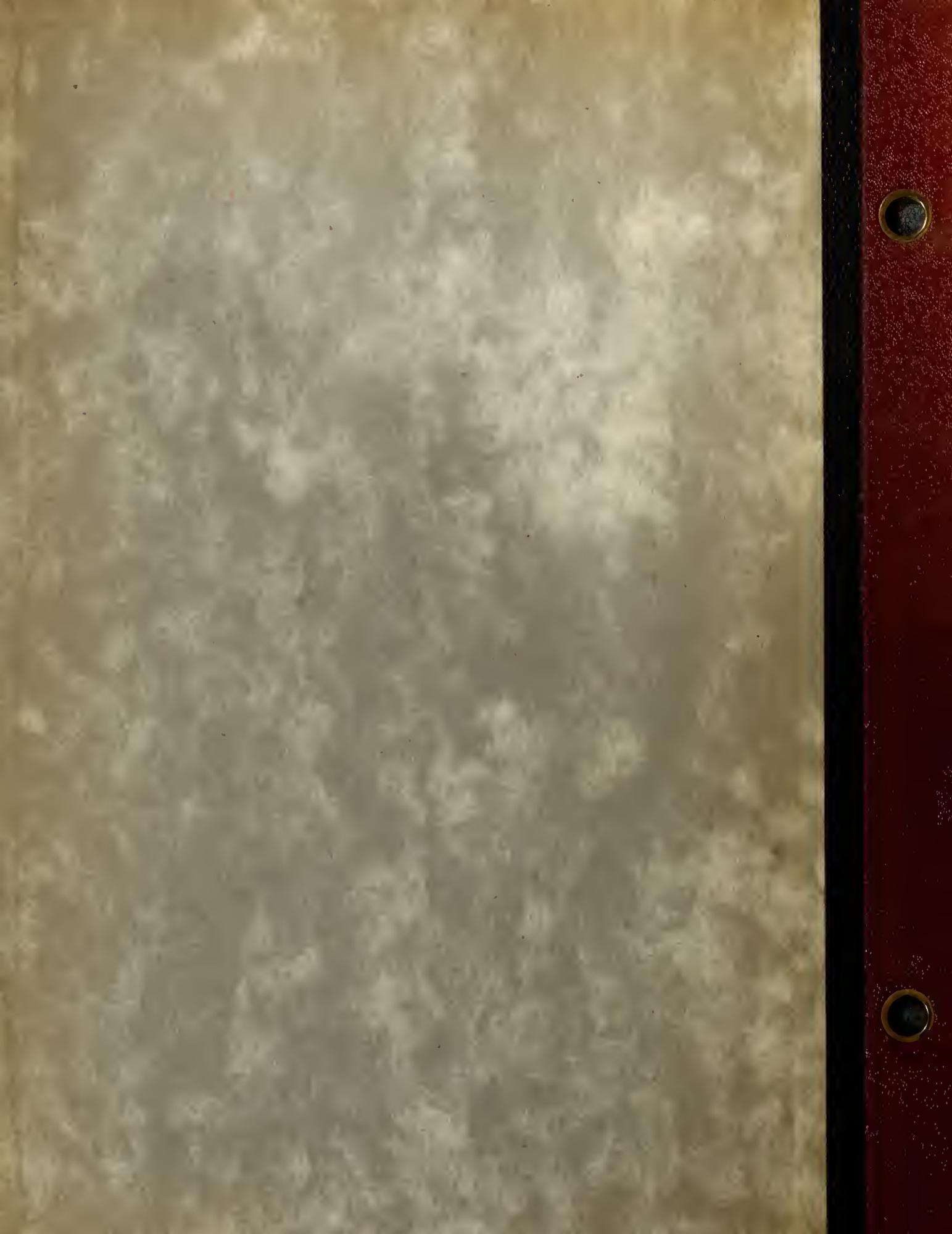


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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE IDEA OF GOD AS FOUND IN THE  
POETRY OF CERTAIN MODERN AMERICAN POETS

by

Anne Metcalf Thomas  
"

(B.S., Northwestern, 1900)  
submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

1931

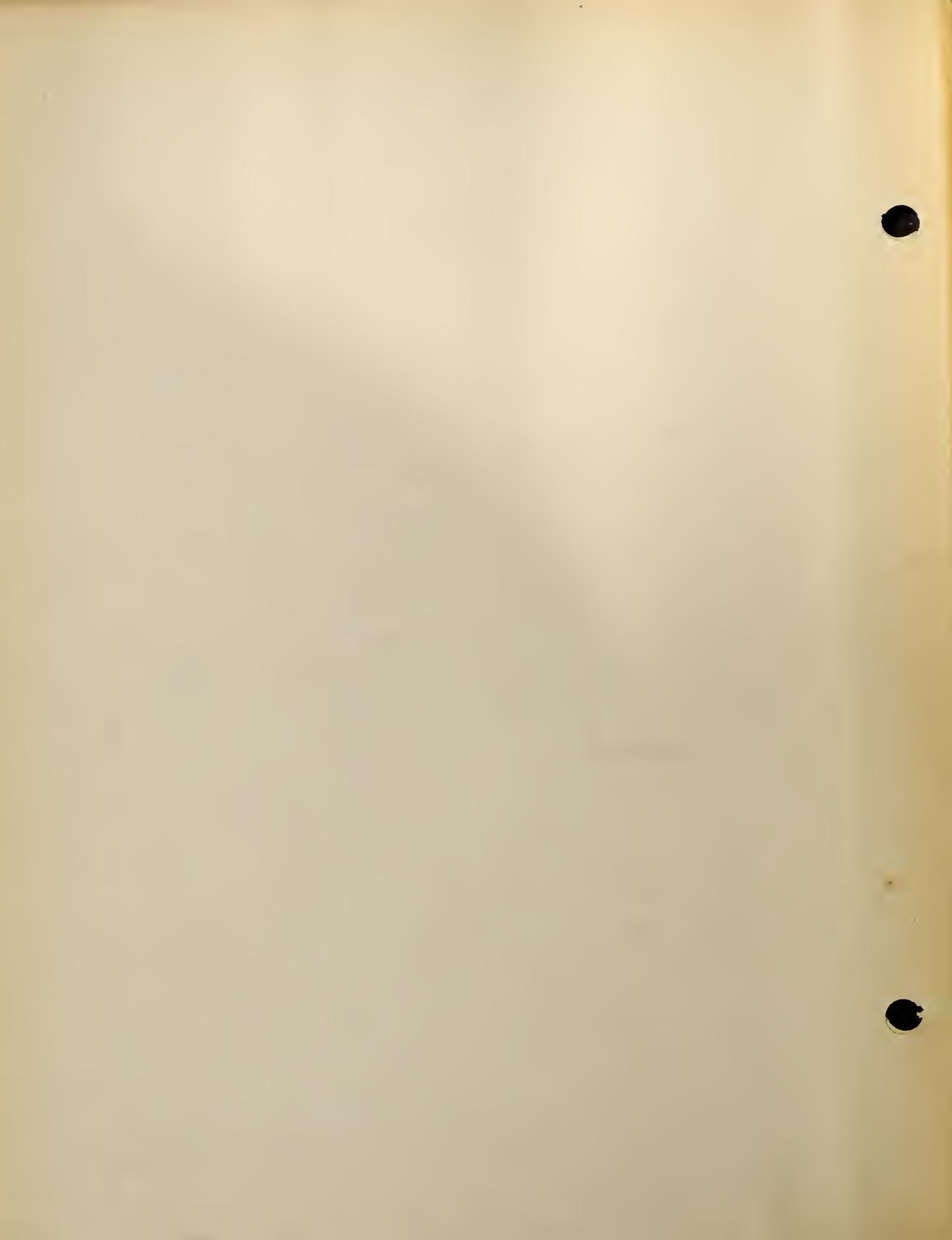
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## I OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

A.

## A. INTRODUCTION

1. Modern American poetry is worth studying; it is important as literature; it reflects American thought.
- 2 A study of the idea of God as found in the poetry of twelve representative American poets would reveal something of America's religious thought.
3. For the purpose of the Thesis modern American poetry is limited to that which has been published since 1912.
4. Twelve poets chosen; reasons for choice:
  - (1) E.A.Robinson (4)Vachel Lindsay (7) Sara Teasdale (10) Joyce Kilmer
  - (2) Robert Frost (5) Carl Sandburg (8) Edna Millay (11) H.D.
  - (3) Amy Lowell (6) Edgar Lee Masters (9) Elinor Wylie (12) T.S.Eliot

B.

## B. THE IDEA OF GOD

Findings classified under:

## 1. BEAUTY AND GOD

a. Beauty at the heart of the world.

- (1) Sensuous delight
- (2) Joy from
- (3) Physical rejuvenation
- (4) Comfort

b. From Beauty to God.

- (1) Pagan
- (2) Ceremonial slant

c. From Music to God.

- (1) Music
- (2) Dancing
- (3) Song

d. Summary of Beauty .



## OUTLINE OF THE THESIS (Continued)

## 2. GOD AS TRUTH

- a. Truth at the World's heart .
- b. Truth and God .
- c. Summary .

## 3. GOD AS WILL

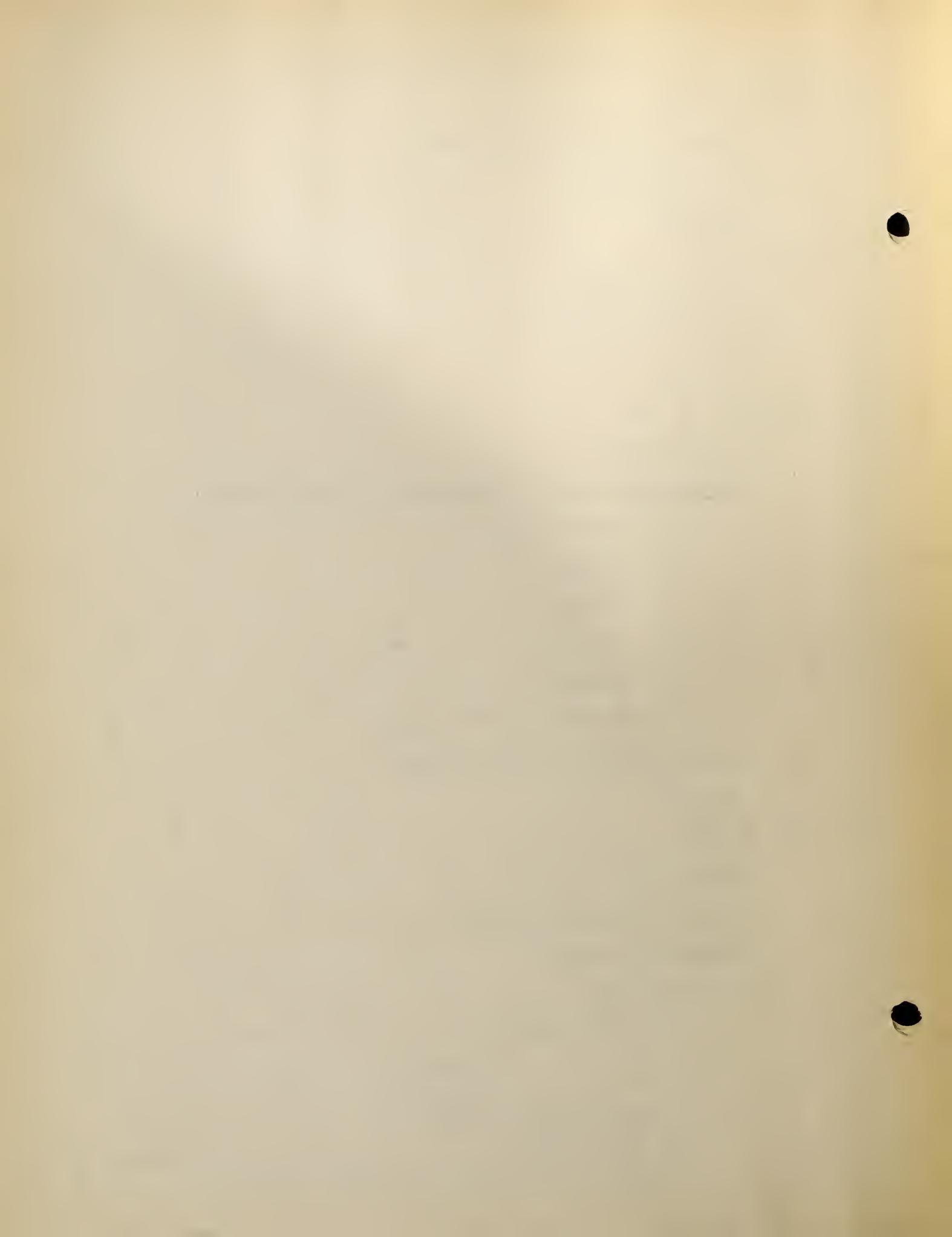
- a. Through nature .
- b. Through reason.
- c. Summary.

## 4. GOODNESS AND GOD

- a. A moral God.
- b. Man's morality associated with the idea of God.
  - (1) Truthfulness.
  - (2) Purity .
  - (3) Courage .
  - (4) Industry.
  - (5) Sympathy .
  - (6) Striving for the ideal.
- c. God striving for righteousness.
- d. Summary.

## 5. GOD AS LOVE

- a. Pagan idea.
- b. Love at the World's heart.
- c. From love to God.
- d. God loves all.
  - (1) Very tenderly.
    - (a) Father.
    - (b) Mother.
  - (2) Forgivingly.
  - (3) Sacrificially.
    - (a) Christ as God's sacrifice.
- e. Summary.



## OUTLINE OF THE THESIS (Continued)

## 6. GOD AS CREATOR

- a. Of the physical world.
- b. Creator of man.
- c. Different ways of regarding the Creator.
  - (1) As creating through the world process.
  - (2) As Light.
  - (3) As Ruler.
    - (a) Controlling from afar.
    - (b) Governing by laws.
    - (c) Guiding by love.
    - (d) Power and majesty.

d. Other allied doctrinal ideas of the Creator.e. Summary.

## 7. THE MINOR NOTE

a. Two poets with no trace of the Minor Note.

- (1) Vachel Lindsay.
- (2) Joyce Kilmer.

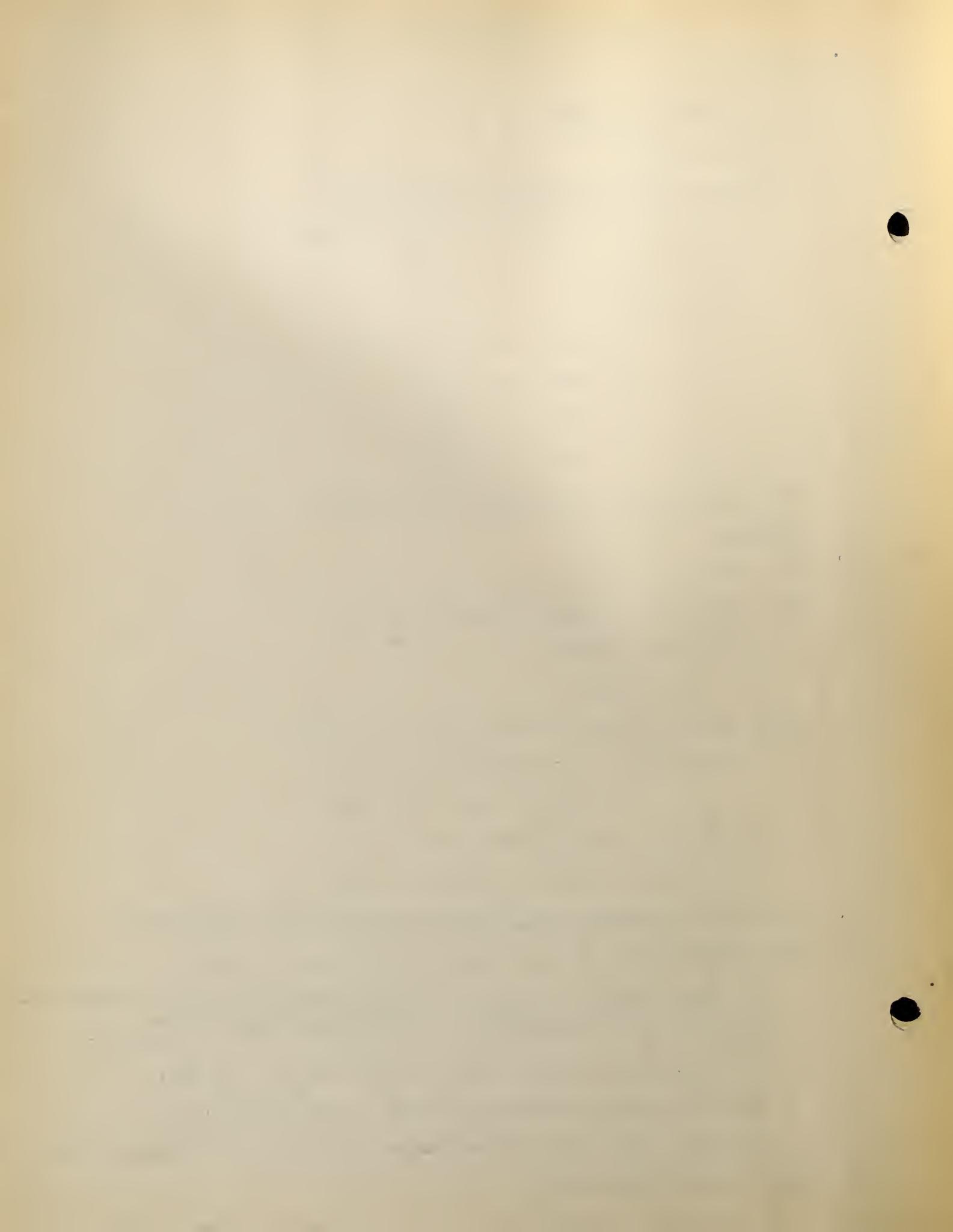
b. Three poets in whom some find the Minor Note.

- (1) Robinson-- (a) Unity of the World.
- (b) Not the Minor Note.
- (2) Frost-- not the Minor Note.
- (3) Masters-- little of the Minor Note.

c. T.S. Eliot considered separately; presents not God but chaos.d. The remaining six poets in whom we find the Minor Note.

- (1) Paganism: only in H.D.; presents only pagan idea of the gods.
- (2) Materialism: not associated with the idea of God.
- (3) Skepticism: occasional in S.Tea\$dale; often in E.Wylie.
- (4) Pessimism: often associated with the idea of God.
- (5) Fatalism: in E.Wylie positive and despairing.
- (6) The Upward Urge: contributes a little to the idea of God.

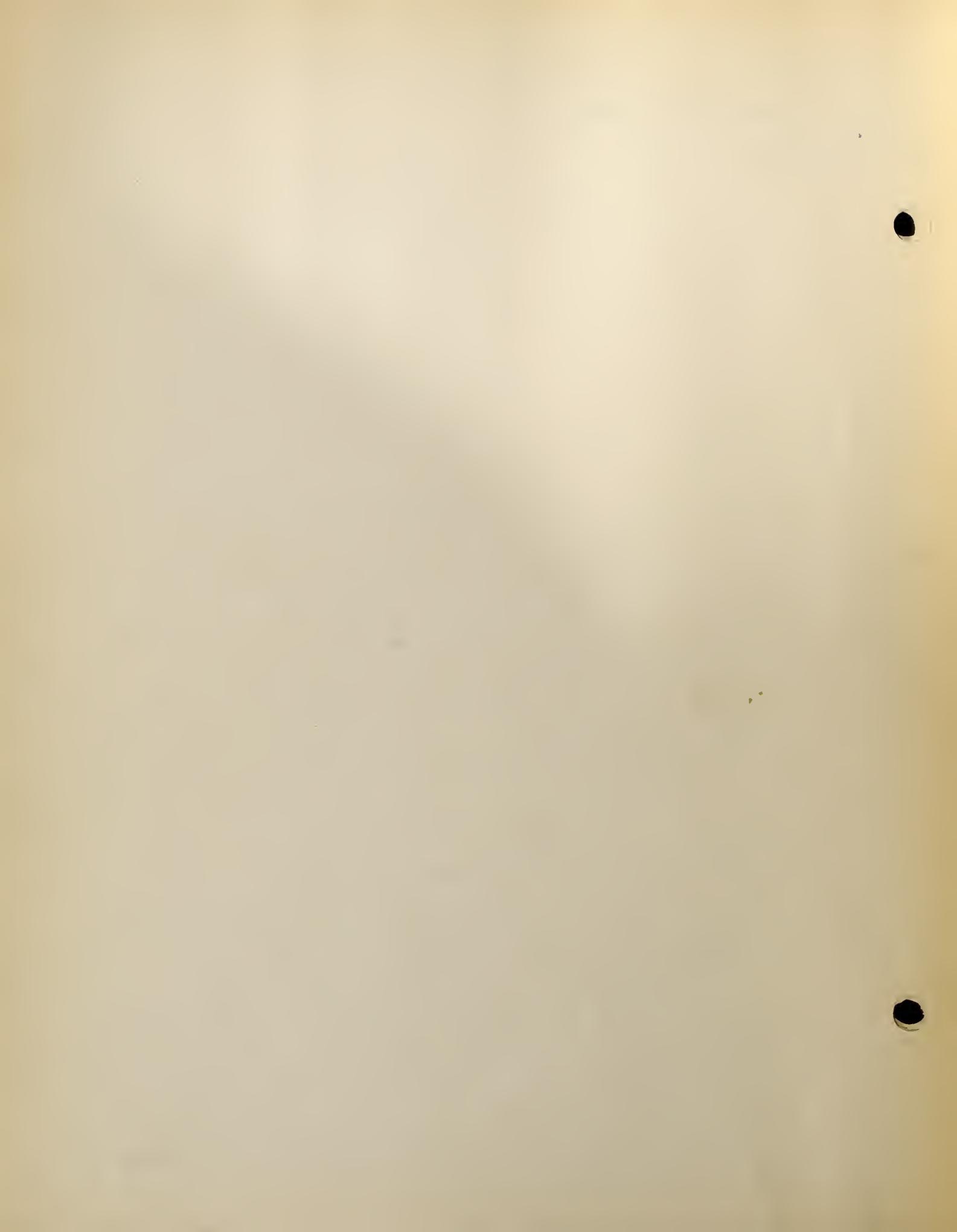
e. Summary of the Minor Note.



## OUTLINE OF THE THESIS (Concluded)

8. SUMMARY OF THE IDEA OF GOD

C.  
C.. CONCLUSION



## II. THE THESIS:

### THE IDEA OF GOD AS FOUND IN THE POETRY OF CERTAIN MODERN AMERICAN POETS

A.  
INTRODUCTION The significance of a study of the American

poetry of today is almost self-evident. In the first place it is considered by many to be mature poetry. "One thing is certain. American poetry has come of age. It is a literature, sensitive, brilliant, and intense. It belongs to us!"

(1)

And, moreover, our American poetry is distinctly American. It represents us. "With reference to the life and thoughts of today, many of our poets may be called reflectors and interpreters."

(2)

With these two basic facts in mind, we may justly turn to certain modern American poets to discover any particular trend in modern American thought.

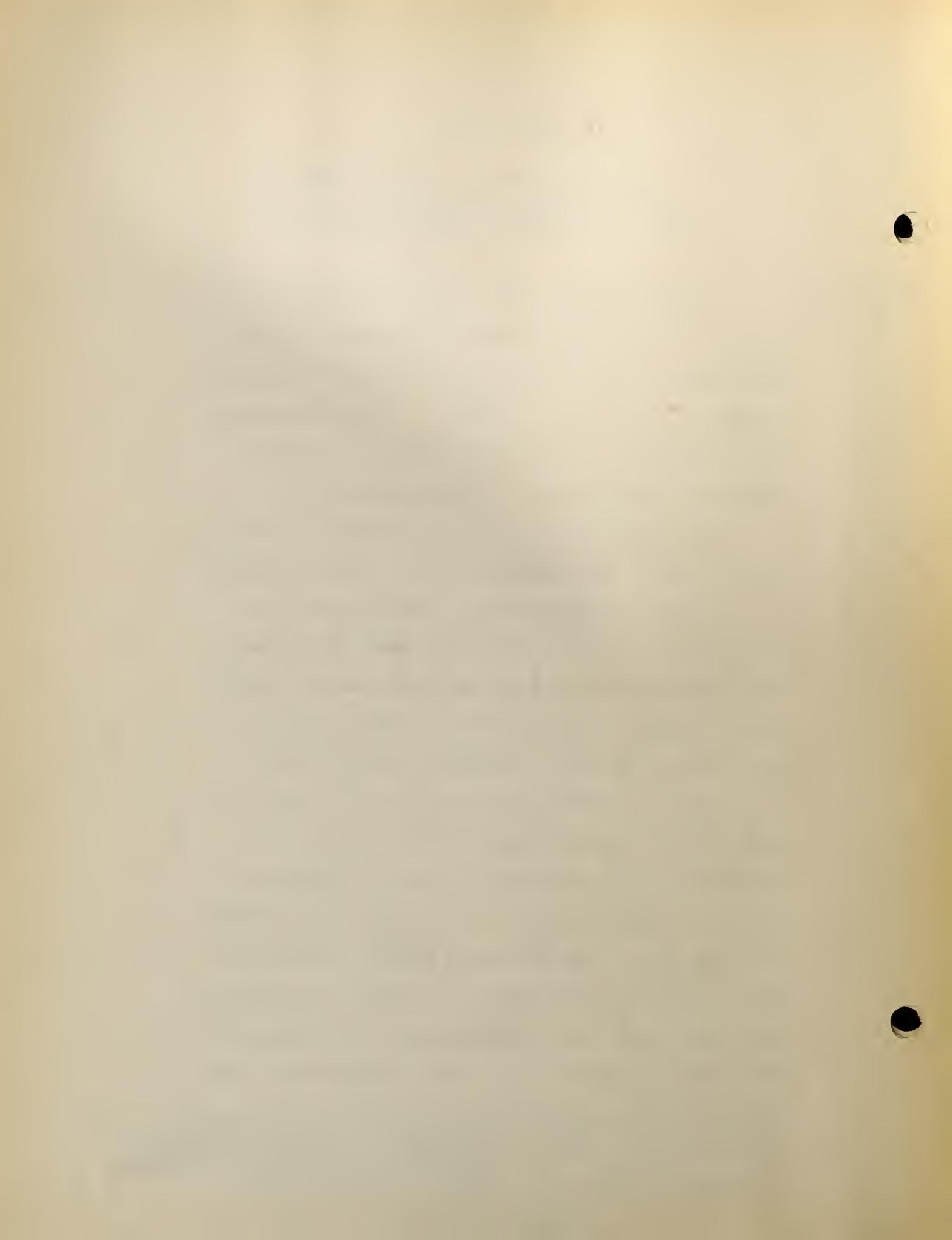
Now, it is sometimes maintained that the literature of today has lost its hold on religion.

"At present the destructive mind in literature is popularly fashionable." And again, "the mistake that has been made by modern realism lies not in its insistence upon 'images' of superficial details and appearance, not in merely reporting them without regard to their significance as shadows of the

(1) Marguerite Wilkinson, The Poetry of Our Own Times, p. 25.

(2) William Lyon Phelps, The Advance of English Poetry in the Twentieth Century, (Preface)

(3) Alfred Noyes, Some Aspects of Modern Poetry,  
Essay on Some Characteristics of Modern Literature, p 343.



eternal reality, or the possibility of using them as images of that beauty which is also truth. This is the sole aim of all true facts and of every imaginative artist". "They have lost their hold on any central or unifying principle".  
 (1)

With this charge against modern poetry, and with it a belief in the significance of our poetry as representing the thought of our people, an investigation of the idea of God in this field of our literature ought, in so far as it goes, either to substantiate or to disprove the accusation. For this search we have chosen the idea of God because it probably bears as much weight in revealing people as does any other religious idea.

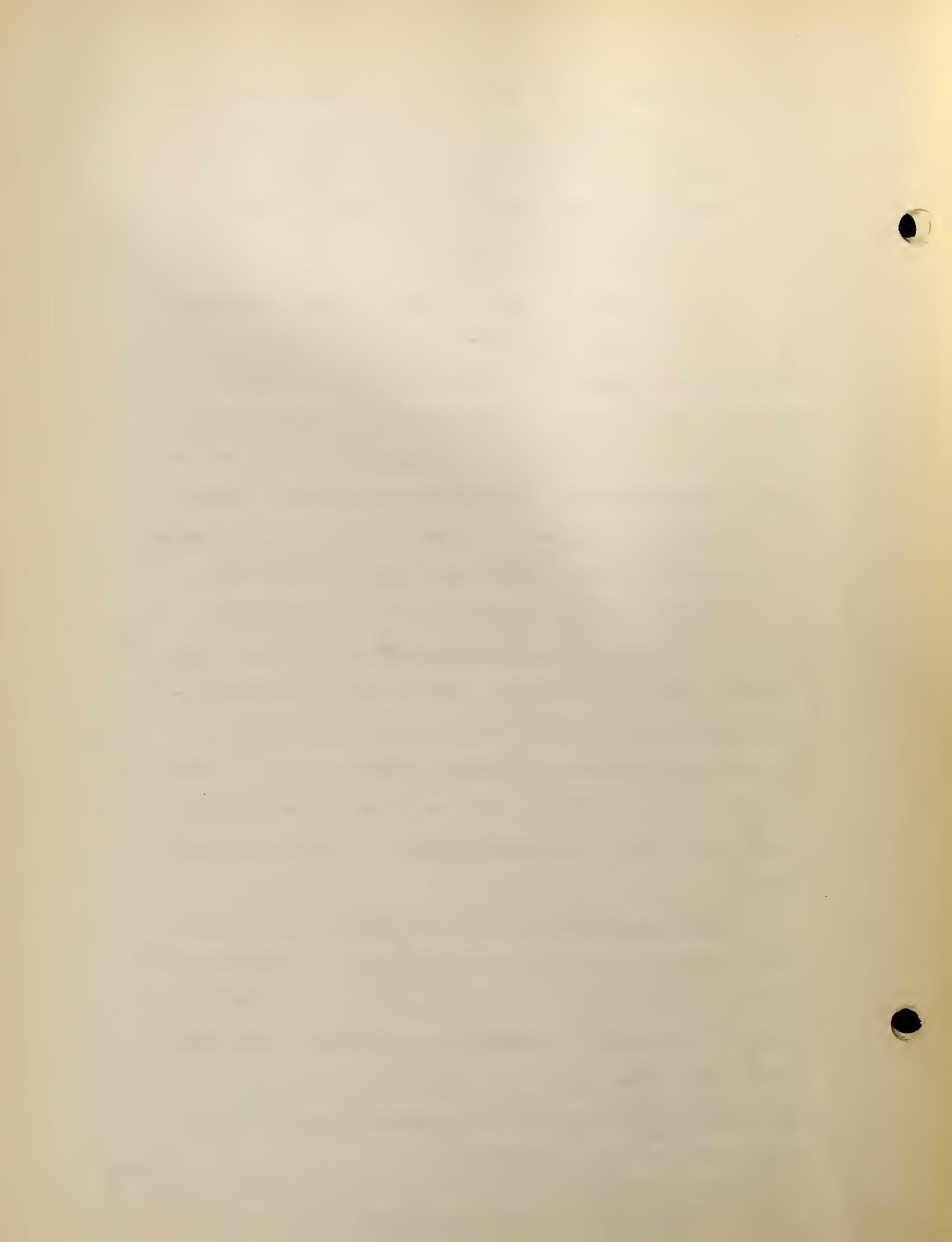
We have limited modern American poetry to that which has appeared since the renascence of 1912. The following poets have been chosen for this field of investigation because the poetry of each represents in some way superiority in modern American poetry. Also, we have tried to select a list of poets whose work reflects the range and diverse vigor of modern American poetry.

Edwin Arlington Robinson, as a precursor of the modern advance of American poetry, could not be omitted. He has twice received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. He is well known for "his sympathetic studies of men whose lives were, from a worldly standpoint, failures".  
 (2)  
 His "The Man Against the Sky" established him in the front rank of American poets".  
 (3)

(1) Ibid , p. 325.

(2) Louis Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry, p. 17.

(3) Ibid., p. 157.



Robert Frost, hardy New England out-door poet, is of established reputation. He is known for his poetic realism; he is a writer of true pastorals. "His is the only true bucolic poetry being written in America today", said Amy Lowell in 1917 in her "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry".

(1)

That "arch radical", Amy Lowell, the vigorous and versatile daughter of a distinguished New England family, was a "born patrician, but a re-born liberal". She said:

(2)

"I am New England  
Because my roots are in it".

(3)

But perhaps she was, after all, a cosmopolitan. She was an earnest advocate of imagism. Her many volumes "testify to a continually adroit craftsmanship".

(4)

Even her severe critic, Clement Wood, finds her poems sometimes "magical and haunting". At least he declares her to be a "celebrity".

(5)

Then we have three poet-radicals from the West; Vachel Lindsay. Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters.

Vachel Lindsay is a "Puritan with a passion for beauty", a "zealous reformer filled with Falstaffian mirth". "No one has given more both as prophet and priest than Vachel Lindsay" to the modern advance of poetry.

(6)

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(1) p. 81.

(2) Marguerite Wilkinson, New Voices, p. 175.

(3) William Lyon Phelps, Advance of Poetry, p. 246.

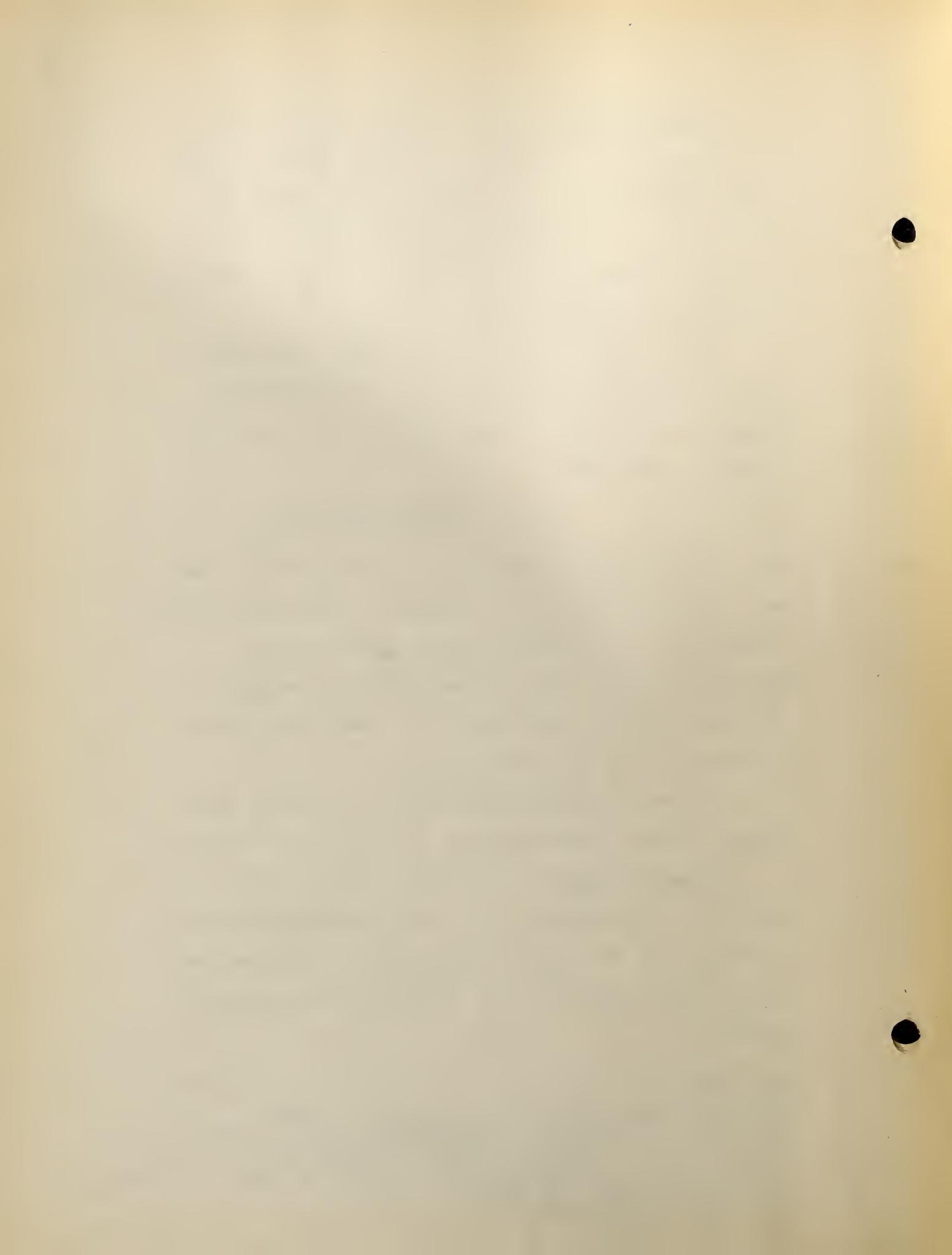
(4) Amy Lowell, What's O'Clock, Lilacs, p.

(5) Untermyer, Modern American Poetry, p. 233.

(6) Clement Wood, Amy Lowell, p. 98.

(7) Phelps, The Advance of Poetry, p. 229.

(8) Ibid., p. 213.



Carl Sandburg is "in manner closer to Walt Whitman than almost any other of our contemporary poets".  
 (1)

Although Professor Phelps find his verse "chaotic in form and content", Mrs Wilkinson says he is "probably the greatest of the radical poets". He is of Swedish immigrant stock inheriting from them "mysticism and poetry". and with his American heart sown "thickly with a strange combination of dissatisfaction and idealism".  
 (2)  
 (3)

Edgar Lee Masters is a contrast to these other Westerners. "He is a bookish poet and most of his work though not the best of it - smells of the lamp". He is the son of a western agricultural pioneer, and yet, strange to say, "Greek is the chief inspiration of his life and of his art".  
 (4)  
 (5)

Then we have three women lyrists; Sara Teasdale, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Elinor Wylie.

Sara Teasdale has "consummate control of the art of lyrical expression". "None of the word-musicians has more completely and melodiously mastered the craft"  
 (6)  
 (7)  
 than has she.

Edna St. Vincent Millay when scarcely nineteen became the author of Renaissance. "one of the most remarkable poems of this generation". She is a dramatist & some reputation as well as a poet.  
 (8)

---

(1) Ibid., p. 289.

(2) Wilkinson, New Voices, p. 180.

(3) Lowell, Tendencies in Modern Poetry, p.

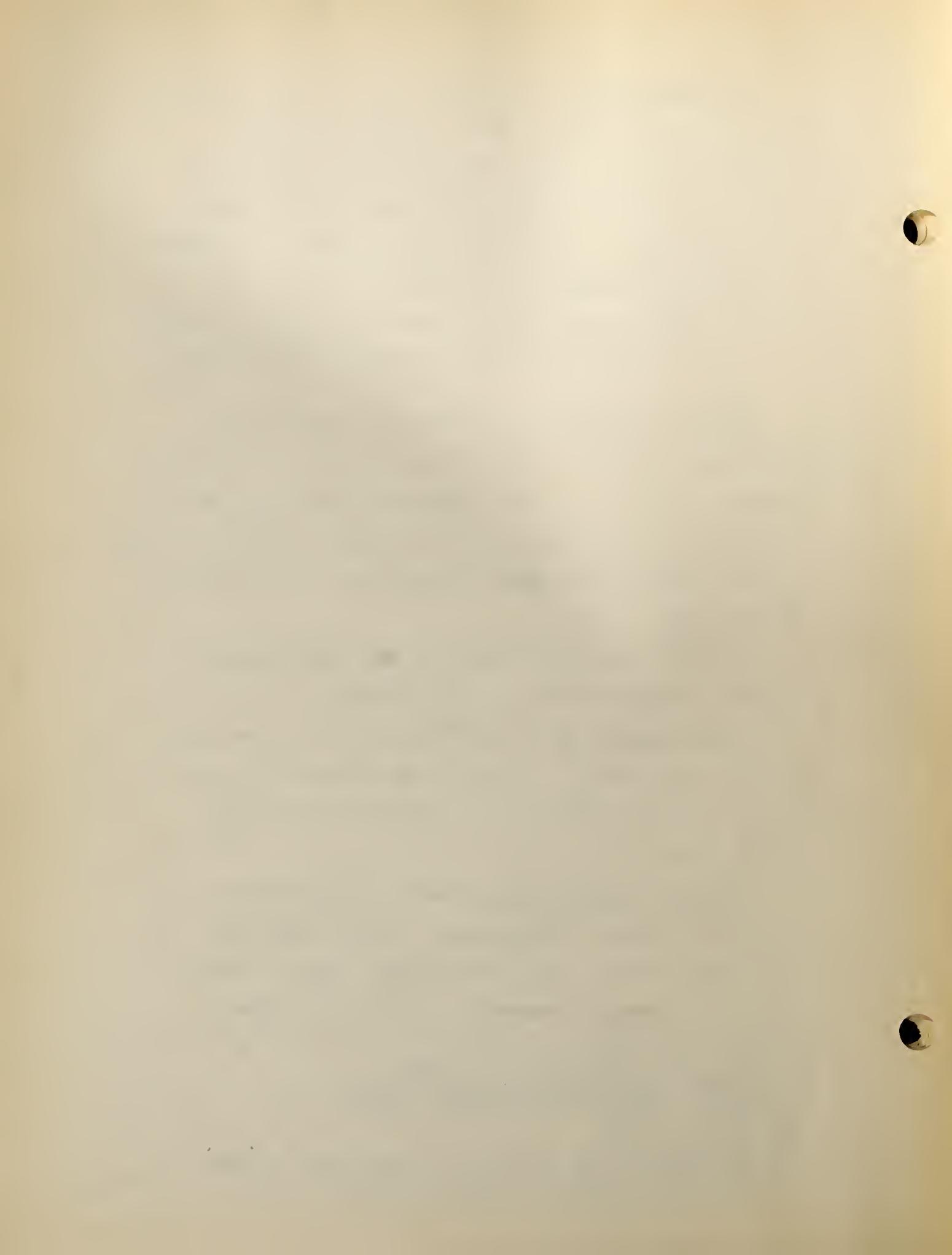
(4) Phelps, Advance of Poetry, p. 261

(5) Ibid., p. 262

(6) Ibid., p. 278.

(7) Untermyer, American Poetry since 1900 p. 206.

(8) Untermyer, Modern American Poetry, p. 633.



"At its height, her poetry reflects the paradox of its being: it is immediate and it is immutable".  
 (1)

"Elinor Wylie is a lyrist of a different character (from Millay and Teasdale) though of a scarcely less interesting genius. She is unusually brilliant, although hers is for the most part a congealed brilliance...hers is often a passion frozen at its source; it glitters, but it seldom glows" She has "incisive intellectual power".  
 (2) (3)

To these lyrists we add a fourth, Joyce Kilmer. Although Kreymborg is probably right when he says, "It now appears that the poet did not live long enough to develop an early promise--", (3a) still by adding him to our list we have added a popular poet who became converted to Catholicism, and we have therefore made our group more cosmopolitan. From his idea of God we may expect to get an ecclesiastical slant.

With the two imagists, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) and Thomas Stearns Eliot, our list is complete. Mrs. Wilkinson said H.D. is "perhaps the only pagan poet-ritualist now writing". With an imagist poet, any interpretation must be an act of the reader. Therefore, to study her for ideas of God is to lay oneself particularly open to criticism. Another person would doubtless make different inferences. Yet, she must be included, for "she is indeed a perfect imagist, and one is tempted to call her the most perfect, or nearly perfect of all American poets". "Her spirit came out of Greece". She is now living in Switzerland.  
 (4) (5)

Thomas Stearns Eliot is in a class all by himself. Untermeyer makes a separate chapter for him and one other. calling them "The Cerebralists", because of their "cold  
 (6)

(1) Ibid., p. 635

(2) Untermeyer, American Poetry since 1900, p. 221.

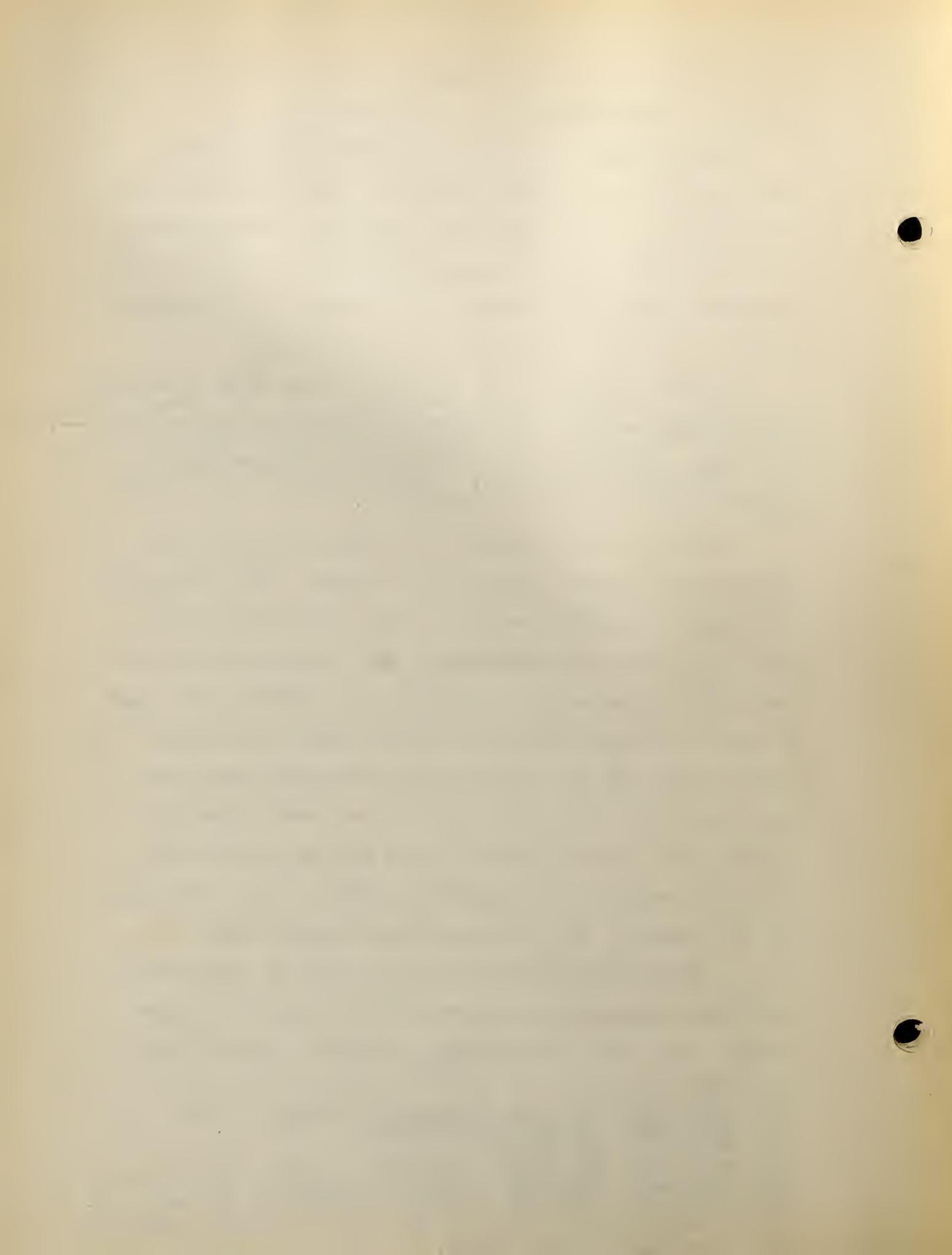
(3) Kreymborg, Our Singing Strength, p. 461.

(4) Wilkinson, New Voices, p. 410

(5) Kreymborg, Our Singing Strength, p. 347.

(6) Untermeyer, American Poetry Since 1900, p. 349.

(3a) Our Singing Strength, p. 406; "a promise, one adds ruefully, deriving from poets of the London nineties, and translators of light French forms".



victories of the intellect". He is a radical of a very different type from Carl Sandburg. His emotions are not redundant but spare. His voice is "sly, insinuating, astirical, and occasionally shrill". He is an ex-patriot,  
 (1)  
 a British citizen and has recently become a member of the Anglo-Catholic Church. In interpreting Eliot we have great privilege, for we have Untermeyer's statement for the fact that no two critics agree.  
 (2)

And so we have the poetry of these twelve poets to search through in order that we may discover what ideas of God they present - twelve representative American poets, who, because of the diversity of their talents and their experiences, represent in a measure not only the poetry of America, but America itself:

1. E.A. Robinson	4. Vachel Lindsay	7. Sara Teasdale, 10, Joyce Kilmer
2. Robert Frost	5. Carl Sandburg	8. Edna Millay
3. Amy Lowell	6. Edgar Lee Masters	9. Elinor Wylie
		11. H.D.
		12. T.S. Elliot

## B. THE IDEA OF GOD

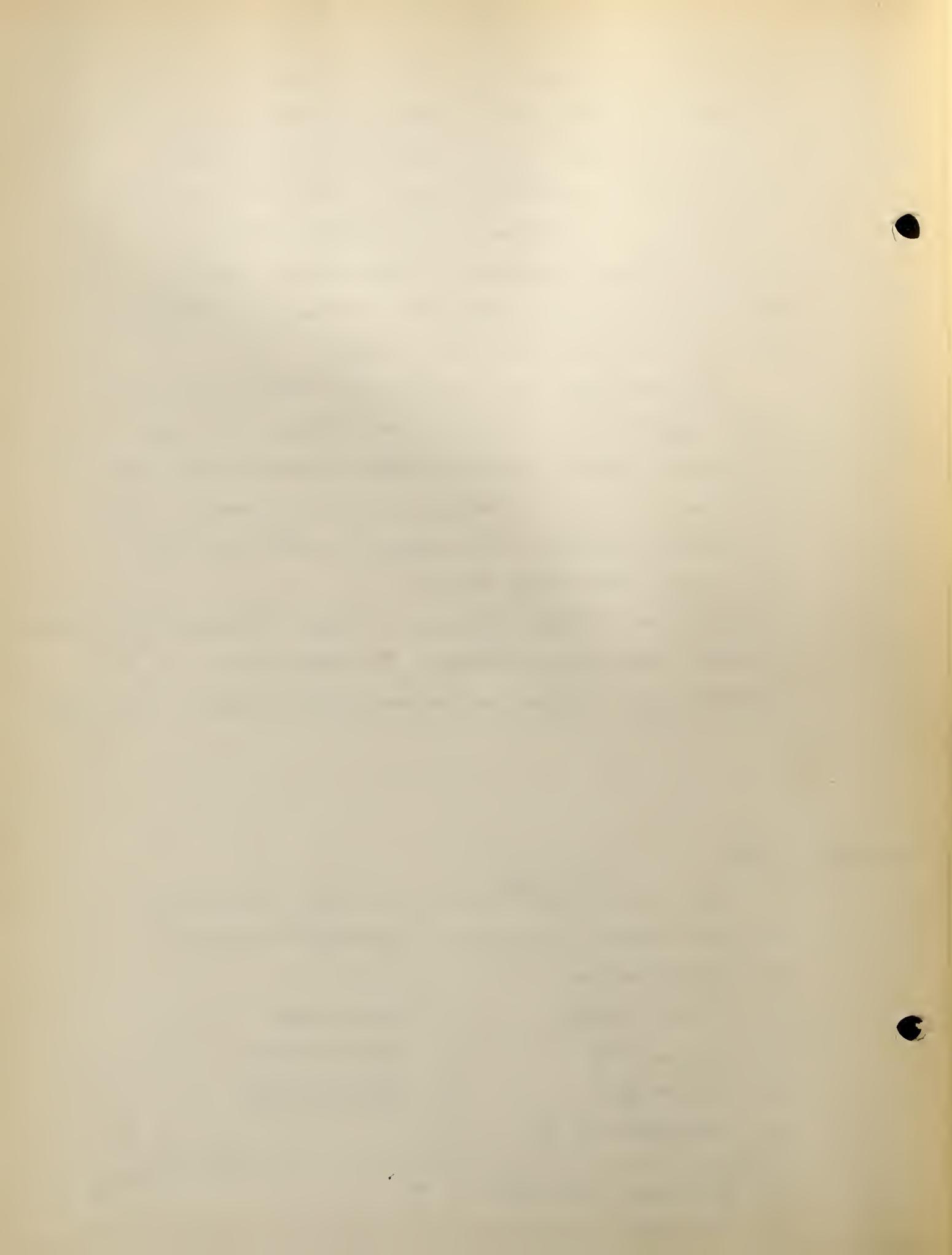
*(to God)*  
 The references that have been found in the poetry of these twelve poets have been classified under the following headings;

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Beauty and God   | 5. God as Love    |
| 2. God as Truth     | 6. God as Creator |
| 3. God as Will      | 7. The Minor Note |
| 4. Goodness and God |                   |

---

(1) Wilkinson, New Voices, p. 82.

(2) Untermeyer, American Poetry Since 1900. p. 356.



## 1 GOD AS BEAUTY

Since the days of the Greek philosophers, man has always suspected that beauty has more than a sensuous significance Plotinus, for instance, who was imbued with Platonic ideas, regarded all beauty as the manifestation of the inner spirit through external matter, while Kant went so far as to insist that we can understand the world only as we realize a relation between our appreciation of the beautiful and reality itself. It is, therefore, no surprise to discover that our chosen poets have associated beauty with the idea of God.

a. Beauty  
at the  
World's  
Heart

Sometimes these poets have shown Beauty not as God, but yet as part of the meaning of the world. In the following, H.D. presents a mere sensuous delight in the beauty god, Apollo,

"I first tasted under Apollo's lips  
Love and love sweetness,  
I, Evadne;  
----  
Was mate of the god of light  
----  
Between my chin and throat  
His mouth slipped over and over."  
(1)

Then again the poet sometimes depicts joy as a result of preserving Beauty. Edna Millay in her early intuitive poem, God's World, is filled with overwhelming ecstasy at beholding Beauty.

"Thy woods, this autumn day, that  
ache and sag  
And all but cry with colour,  
---  
My soul is all but out of me."  
(2)

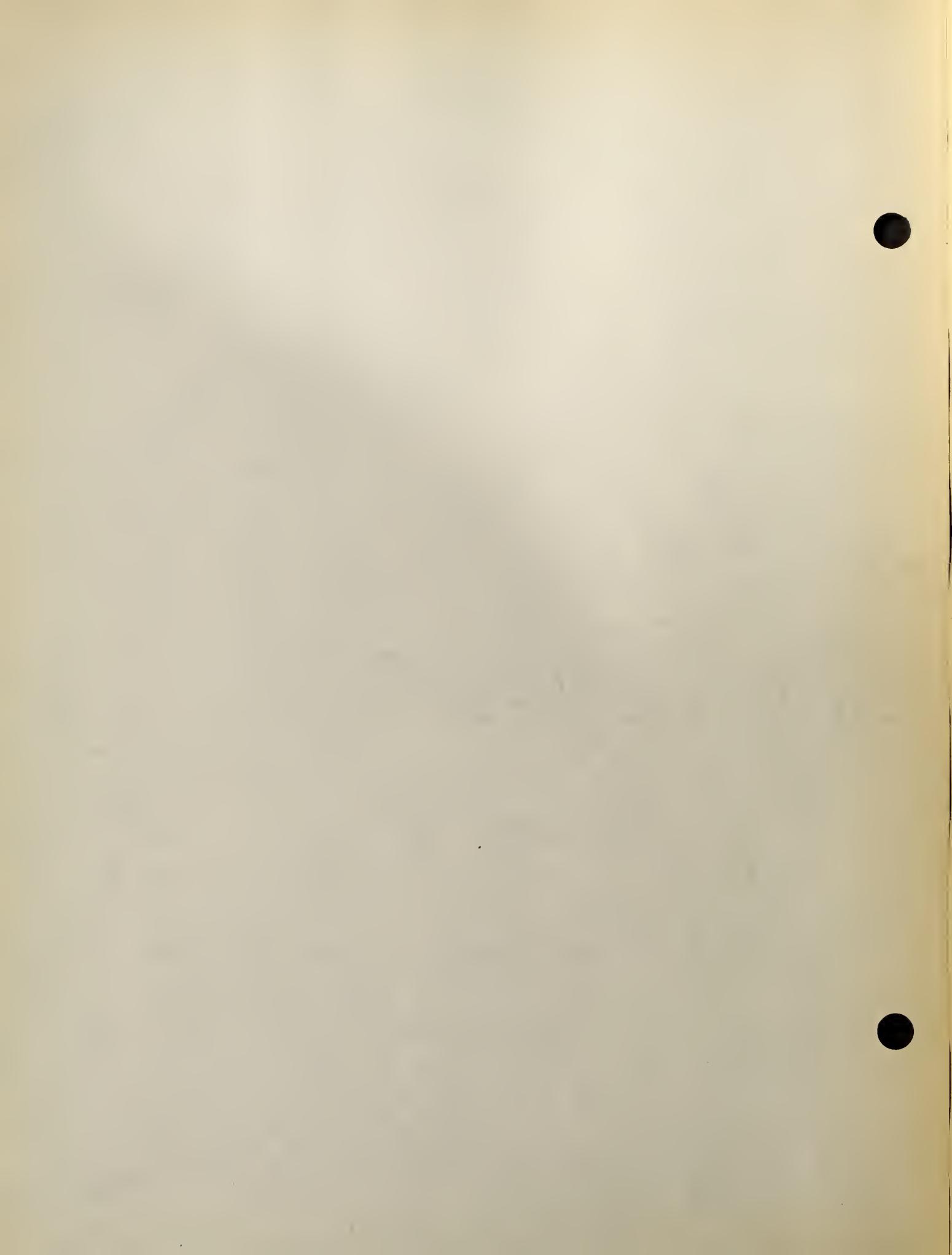
(1) H.D. Modern American Poets (Aiken) p. 269.

See also Elinor Wylie, Monroe & Henderson, Beauty, p. 599.  
"Enshrine her and she dies". She reaches a different conclusion

(2) Renaissance, God's World, p. 40.

(1) Pagan  
Idea

(2) Beauty  
Gives  
Joy.



(3) Renews One And in Renascence she receives not only joy but Physically. also physical resuscitation from this contact. She has been so stricken with a sense of personal sin and of sorrow for the world's suffering- a feeling which has followed her ecstasy at the beauty of the world- that she has felt herself buried "six feet under ground". Then the rain pours upon her, and it is the beauty of the rain that restores her to a desire to live.

"O God, I cried, give me new birth,  
And put me back upon the earth!

---

And all at once the heavy night  
Fell from my eyes and I could see."

(1)

And not only do we find that beauty sometimes restores physically, but in the following Sara Teasdale gets comfort from the contact

"If I am peaceful, I shall see  
Beauty's face continually;  
Feeding on her wine and bread  
I shall be wholly comforted,  
For she can make one day for me  
Rich as my last eternity."

(2)

and a similar comfort is found here,

"Beauty, I have worshipped you

----

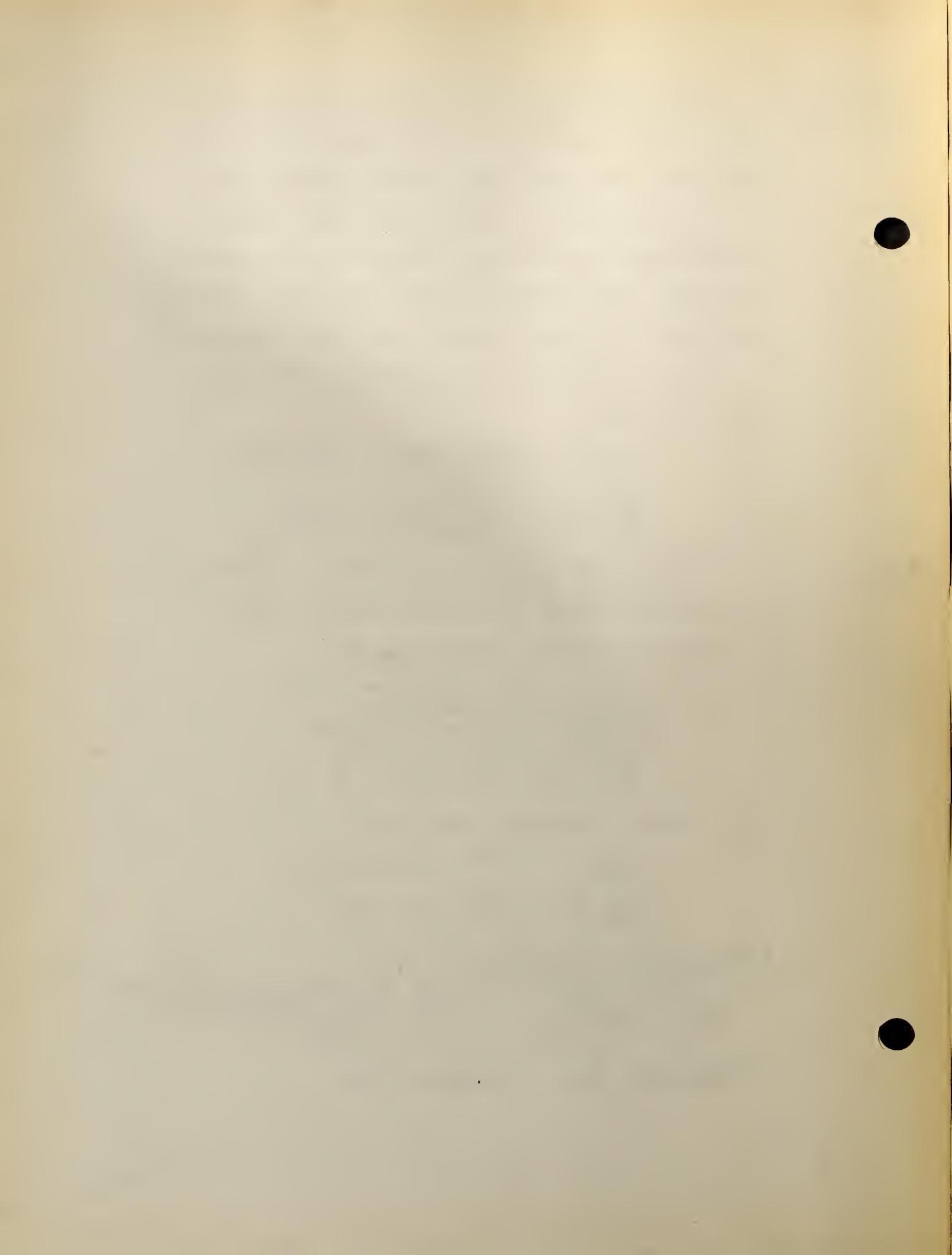
Let this single hour atone  
For the theft of all of me."

(3)

(1) Renascence, Renascence, v 9.

(2) Teasdale, Flame and Shadow, The Wind in the Hemlock, p. 144.  
See also Elinor Wylie, Angels and Earthly Creatures,  
Chimera Sleeping, p. 24: "And nothing remains of fear  
and grief".

(3) Flame and Shadow, August Moonrise.



b. From Beauty  
to God

Although the following quotation is taken from H.D.'s Heliodora, and might therefore be considered to have no religious implication except in reproducing Greek thought, still we use it here because the capital "G". would seem to

(1) Pagan  
Idea

indicate something more. The artist speaks:

"god of beauty

-----  
I dedicate all of my soul  
to you, to you  
all my strength and my power;

-----  
till God shall awake  
again in men's hearts,  
who have said he is dead  
our King and our Lover.

(1)

(2) Ceremonial  
Slant

Elinor Wylie gives this idea a ceremonial slant - and also a lighter tone - in Miranda's Supper (Virginia 1866):

"Moonlight blooms on the magnolias  
Whose cups contain the Holy Ghost;  
The evening is an ardent chapel  
A garden fenced with flowering apple;  
Every flower holds a candle."

(2)

And Miss Millay, in Renaissance, with the ardor of youthful adventure, seems to touch God as she makes her contact with beauty:

"The sky, I thought it not so grand:  
I most could touch it with my hand,  
And reaching up my hand to try,  
I screamed to feel it touch the sky.  
I screamed, and lo! Infinity  
Came down and settled over me

-----  
The ticking of Eternity.

(3)

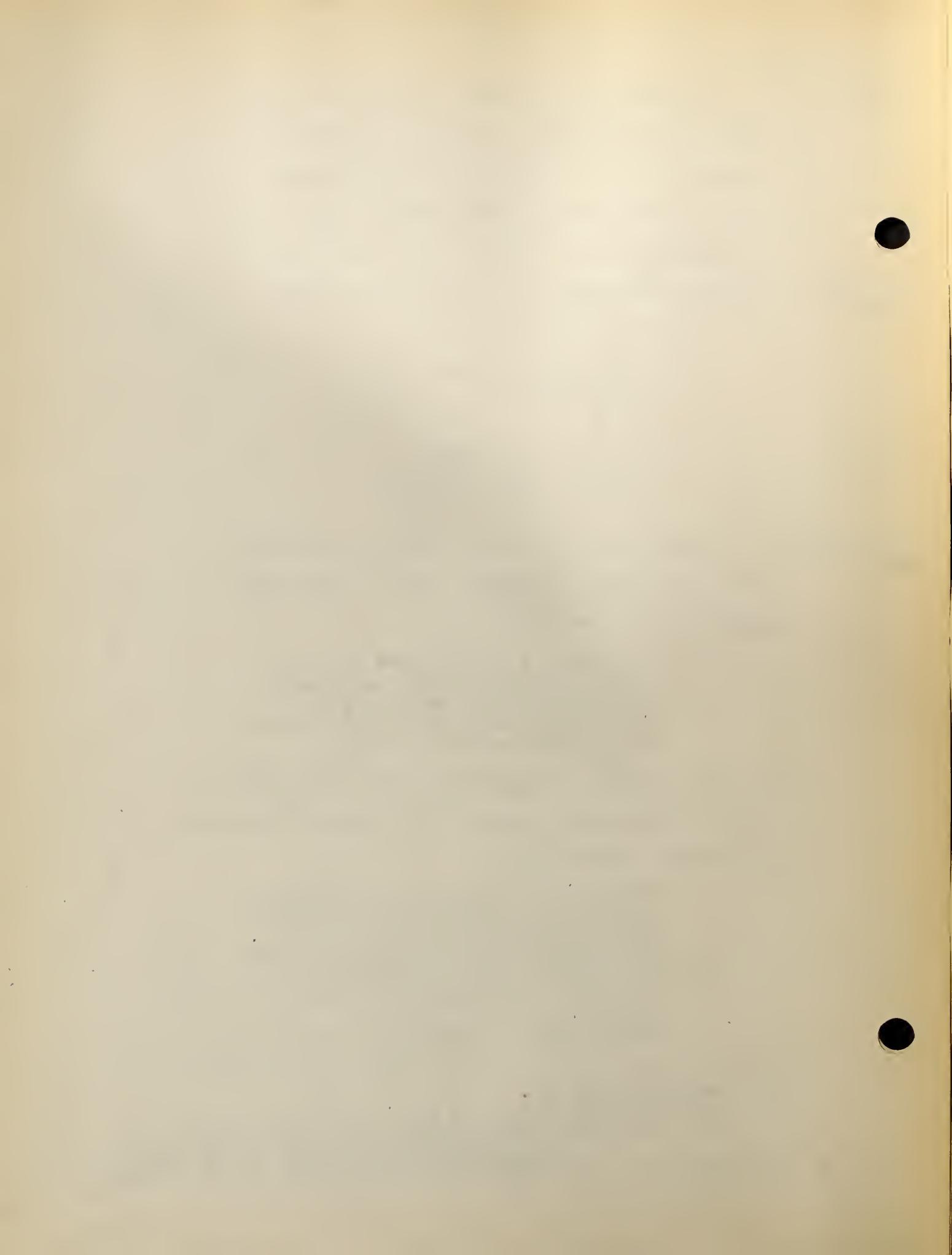
(1) Charioteer, p. 91.

(2) found in Drinkwater, C & B., p. 423.

See also Kilmer, Main Street, The Thorn, p. 55;

The Cathedral of Rheims, p. 68; Roses, p. 49.

(3) Renaissance and Other Poems, Renaissance, p. 14.



After years of steadily cultivating the intellectual side of her nature - as the volumes of her poetry would seem to testify - she makes again an acknowledgment of the closeness of God to beauty - this time with regrets -

"I would to God I ever quenched and fed  
As in my youth  
From the flask of song, and the good bread  
Of beauty richer than truth."  
(1)

c. From Music      Beauty of sound has also been presented by these to God poets as leading to God    Mr. Robinson finds God keeping the world in harmony,

(1) Music            "God's touch will keep its one chord quivering."  
(2)

Joyce Kilmer says,

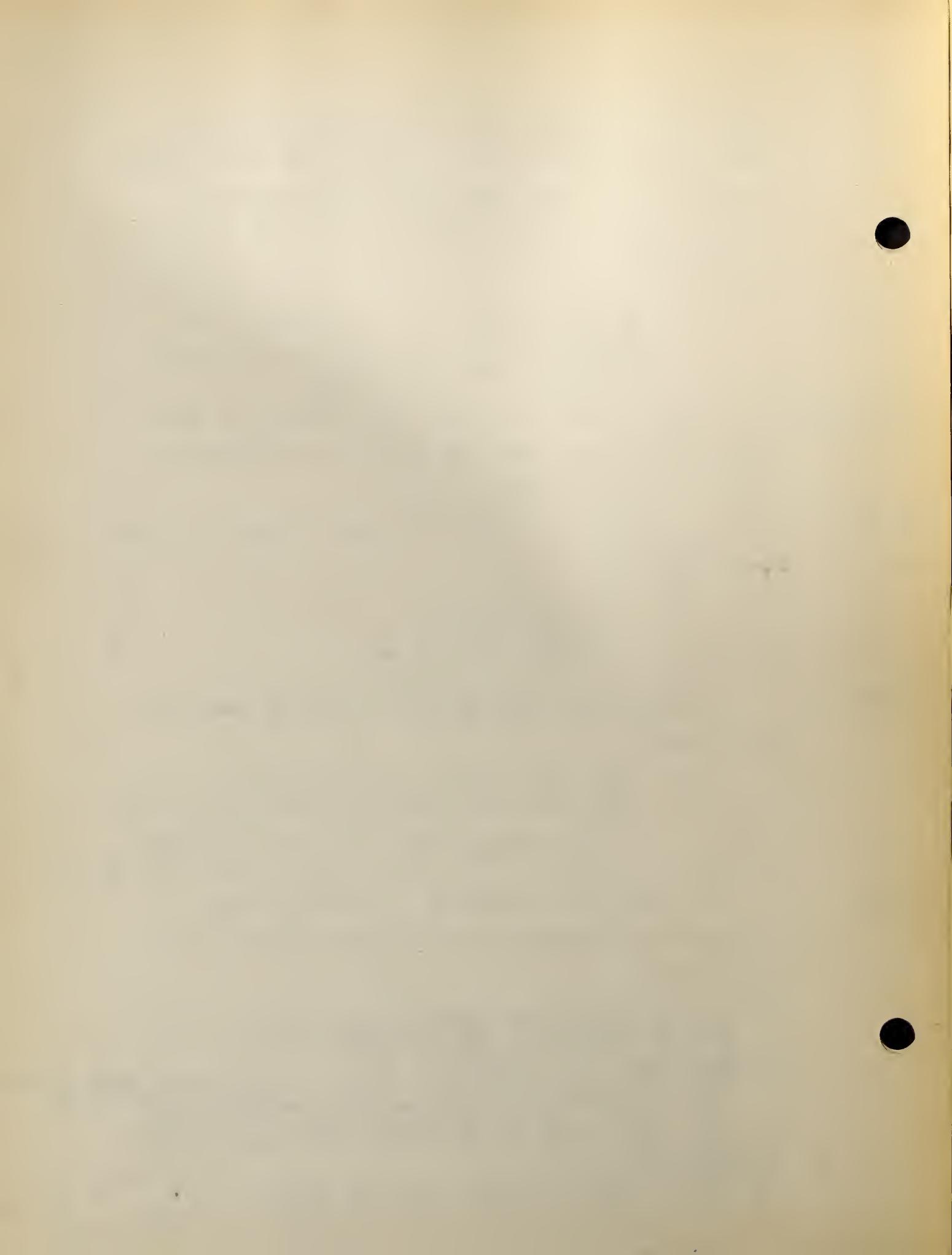
"God is at the organ  
I can hear  
A mighty music echoing  
Far and near"  
(3)

(2) Dancing          In How a Little Girl Danced Mr. Lindsay sees God in dancing:

"The music of God is her innermost brooding  
The whispering angels her footsteps sustain,  
---  
I know a dancer who finds the true Godhead,  
Who bends o'er a brazier in Heaven's clear plane".  
(4)

(3) Song            And, there are references to show that these poets have associated the ideas of God and song in a similar manner.  
(5)

- 
- (1) The Buck in the Snow, The Anguish, p. 31.  
See also Frost, N.H. Star in a Stone-Boat, p. 16.
  - (2) Collected Poems, L'envoi, p. 108.
  - (3) Merrifield, Modern Religious Verse, God is at the Organ, p. 133.  
See also Robinson, Collected Poems The Dead Village, p. 88.  
and Millay, Harp Weaver, The Concert, p. 40; and  
Ibid., Beethoven, p. 69; Masters, The Great Valley,  
Autochthon, p. 38.
  - (4) Collected Poems, p. 65
  - (5) Kilmer, Trees and Other Poems, The Rosary, p. 42;  
And Lindsay, Collected Poems, Last Song of Lucifer, p. 116.  
Also Kilmer, Main Street and Other Poems, p.p. 30, 31, 34,  
38, 39, 47, 62.



Summary of  
BEAUTY

And so, we have discovered references <sup>(to God made)</sup> ~~by nine~~ <sup>(1)</sup> of these poets under consideration, showing that they have associated Beauty with God in many different shades of meaning, ranging from the pagan passion for the God of Apollo depicted by H.D. to this calm assurance of Mr. Robinson,

"Ever there comes an onward phrase to me  
Of some transcendent music I have heard;  
--- a glad strain of some vast harmony."

(2)

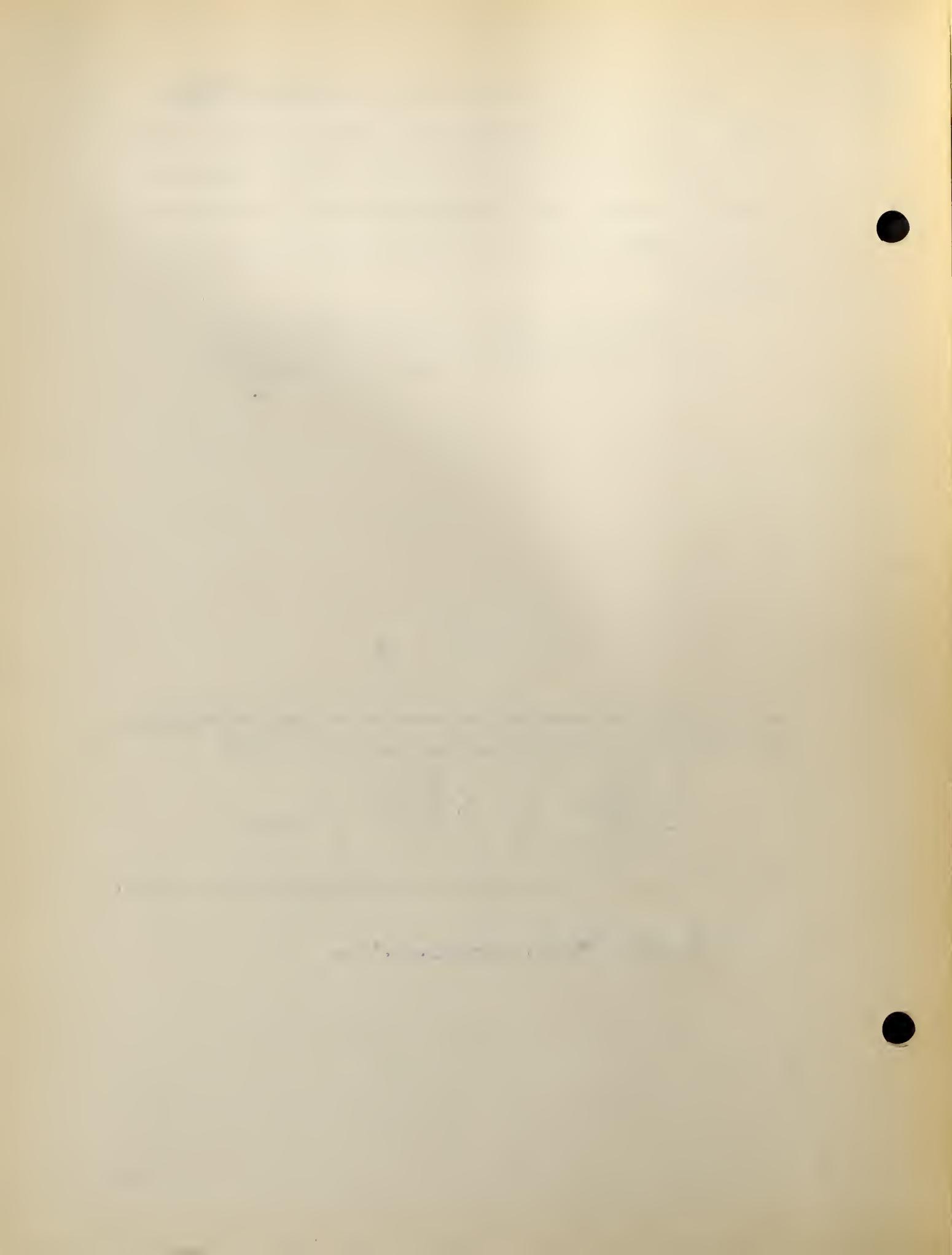
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(1) We have given in this section 31 quotations showing how these poets have associated Beauty with God:

- |             |    |             |           |
|-------------|----|-------------|-----------|
| 1. Kilmer   | 11 | 6. Robinson | 2         |
| 2. Millay   | 5  | 7. Frost    | 1         |
| 3. Lindsay  | 3  | 8. Masters  | 1         |
| 4. Wylie    | 3  | 9. H. D.    | 2 (pagan) |
| 5. Teasdale | 2  |             |           |

This list includes all except Lowell, Sandburg and Eliot.

(2) Collected Poems, L'envoy, p.108.



## 2. GOD AS TRUTH

As Beauty has always been an expression of the idea of God, so also has Truth. Truth has been considered the manifestation of thought, and thought has pre-supposed God.

Our selected poets have apparently shared this universal conviction.

a. Truth  
at the  
World's  
Heart

The implication of the following quotation from Edna Millay is perhaps that, for her, Thought lies at the center of the world:

"Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare,  
O blinding hour, O holy terrible day,  
When first the shaft into his vision shone  
Of light anatomized;  
(1)

b. Truth  
and God

Vachel Lindsay makes a more direct reference to God as Intellect,

"Where marvellous thoughts from God came  
sweeping down."  
(2)

Edgar Lee Masters says of Robert G. Ingersoll,  
"He stripped off the armor of institutional  
friendships  
To dedicate his soul,  
To the terrible deities of Truth and Beauty!"  
(3)

But it remains for Mr. Robinson to present a considerable number of references to Truth as an expression of the Eternal, In The Garden he speaks of

"Thought's eternal seed  
Love-rooted in God's garden of the mind"  
(4)

And again:

"That record of All-Soul whereon God writes  
In everlasting runes the truth of Him."  
(5)

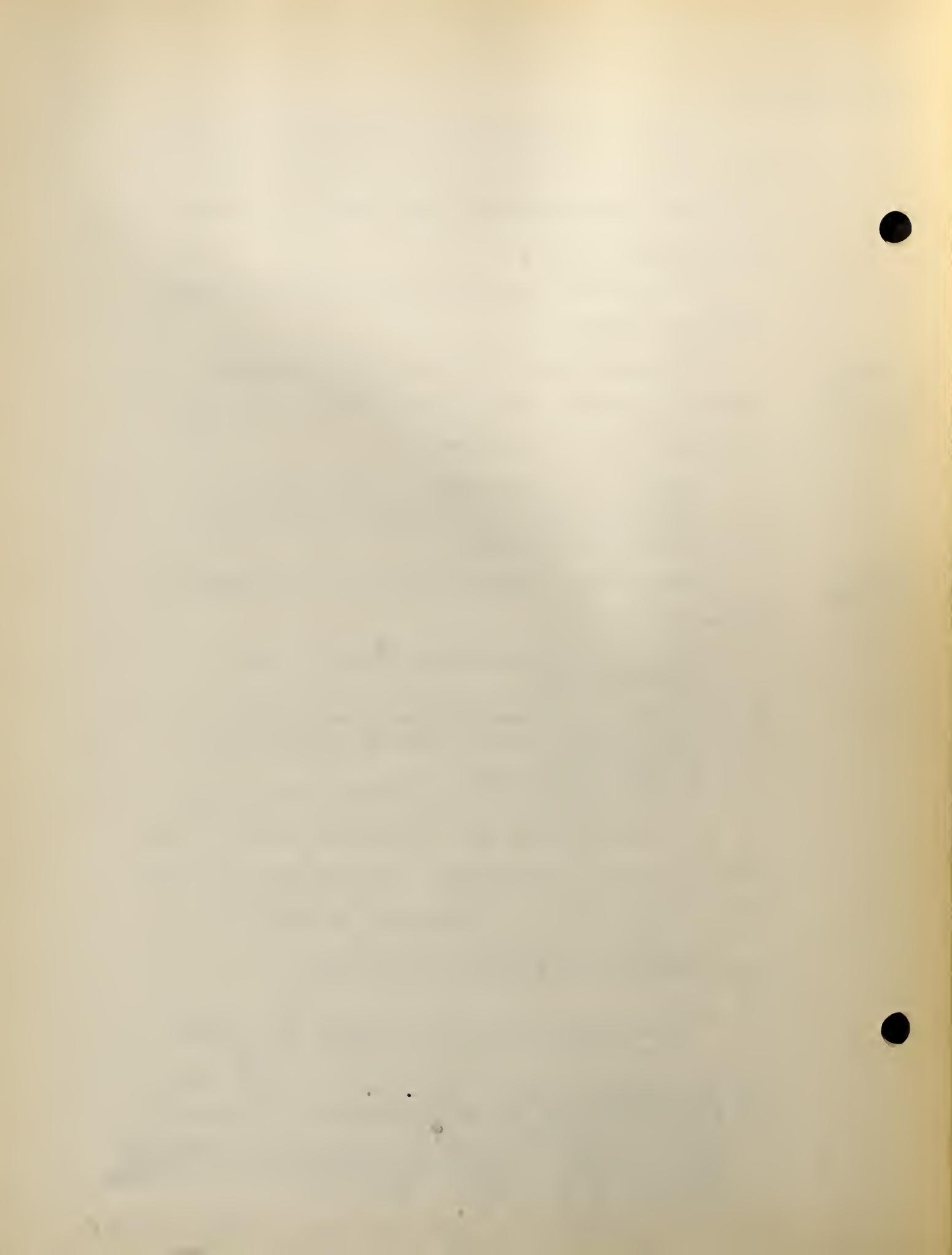
(1) Harp-Weaver, Sonnet XXII p. 74.

(2) Collected Poems, The Hearth Eternal, p 345; also Beggars Valentine, p. 297.

(3) The Great Valley, Robert G. Ingersoll. See also The Last Confession, p. 262, "archangel Truth"; and Songs and Satires, The Star. p. 171.

(4) Collected Poems, p. 87.

(5) Ibid , Octaves VI, p. 102: See also The Sage, p. 192 ↗



And this:

"Nor ever shall we know the cursed waste  
Of life in the beneficence divine

-----  
Till we have drunk and trembled at the taste,  
The mead of Thought's prophetic endlessness.

(1)

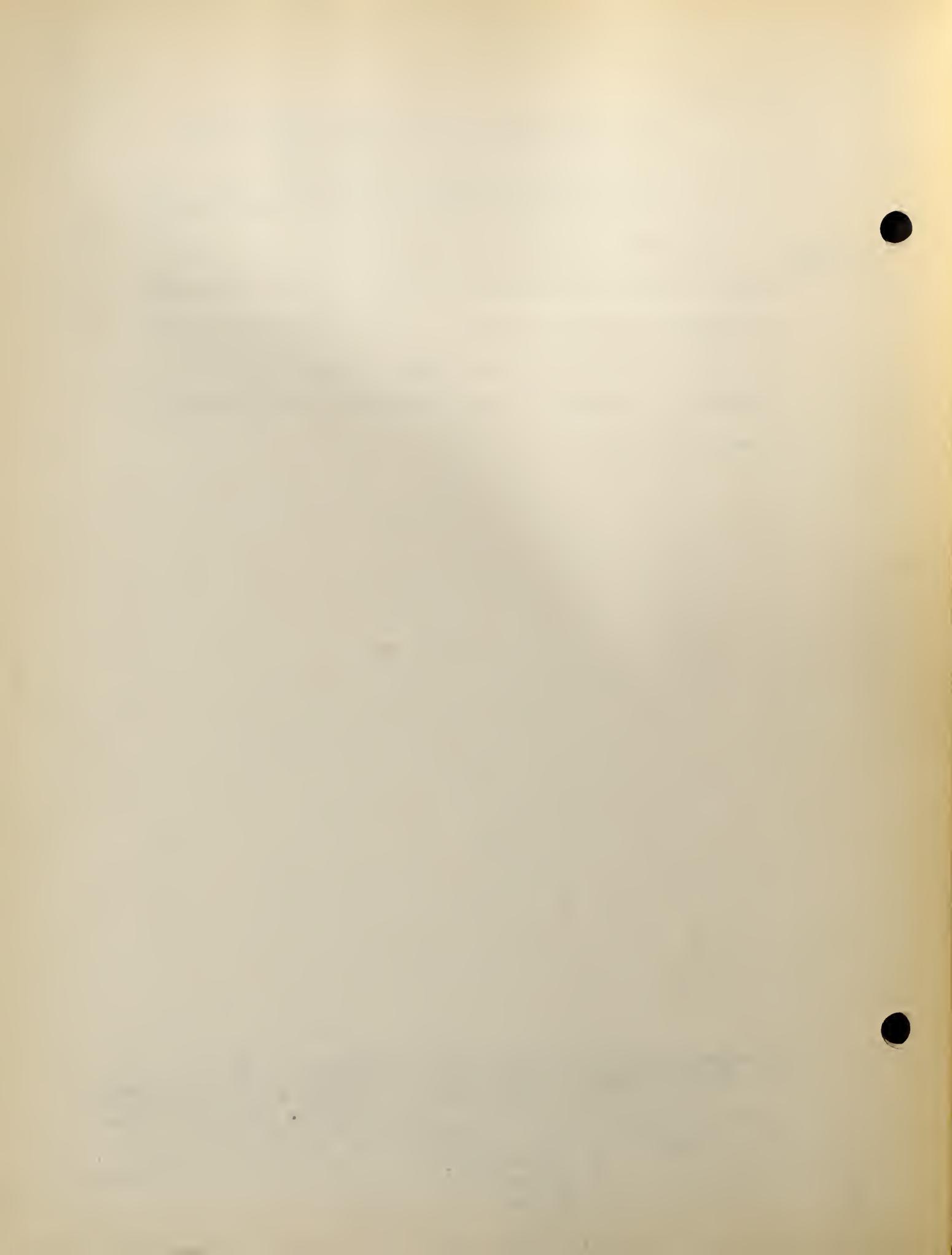
c. Summary of Truth      Of the twelve authors whose poetry we have examined, we have discovered only five as making reference (2) to Truth as an aspect of God. And of these five poets it would be accurate to say that Mr. Robinson and Mr. Masters are the only ones persistently presenting this view of the Deity.

---

(1) Robinson, Collected Poems, II Sonnet, p. 89.  
See also Frost, New Hampshire, I will sing to you One-O

(2) We have shown in this division twelve instances where these poets have associated God and Truth:  
p. 74.

1. Robinson 5
2. Masters 3
3. Lindsay 2
4. Frost 1
5. Millay 1



### 3. GOD AS WILL

The conviction that a mighty will or purpose dominates the whole of life has also led men to identify that purpose with a World Will, which may reasonably be interpreted as an idea of God. And this conviction, although not widespread, is not utterly lacking among these poets whom we are studying.

- a. Through Nature      Sara Teasdale's life is often overshadowed with grief and doubt. But in Twilight (Nahant) the quiet scene seems to restore her faith with a belief in a Divine Will,

"and fear  
Of what life may be, and what death can do,  
Fell from us like steel armor, and we knew  
The wisdom of the Law that holds us here.  
It was as though we saw the Secret Will,  
It was as though we floated and were free."  
(1)

The implication of the following quotation from Robert Frost is also that God rules the world according to His will. He, too, associates this idea with nature's beauty.

"Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers today,  
-----  
For this is love and nothing else is love,  
The which it is reserved for God above  
To sanctify to what far ends He will."  
(2)

(1) Dark of the Moon, p. 49

(2) Frost, A Boy's Will, Amer. ed., p. 43  
see also Ibia., p. 41, The Trial by Existence.



b. Through reason Although Sara Teasdale arrives at the thought of the Divine Will intuitively through nature she also reaches it as a result of contemplation:

"Unless I learn to look at Grief  
Unshirking from her tear-blind eyes,  
-----

Unless I learn these things on earth  
Why was I ever given birth?"

(1)

Mr. Masters speaks with a like assurance here,

"like our souls  
Which move in darkness, listening to the beat  
Of our mysterious hearts, or with closed eyes  
Sensing a central Purpose."

(2)

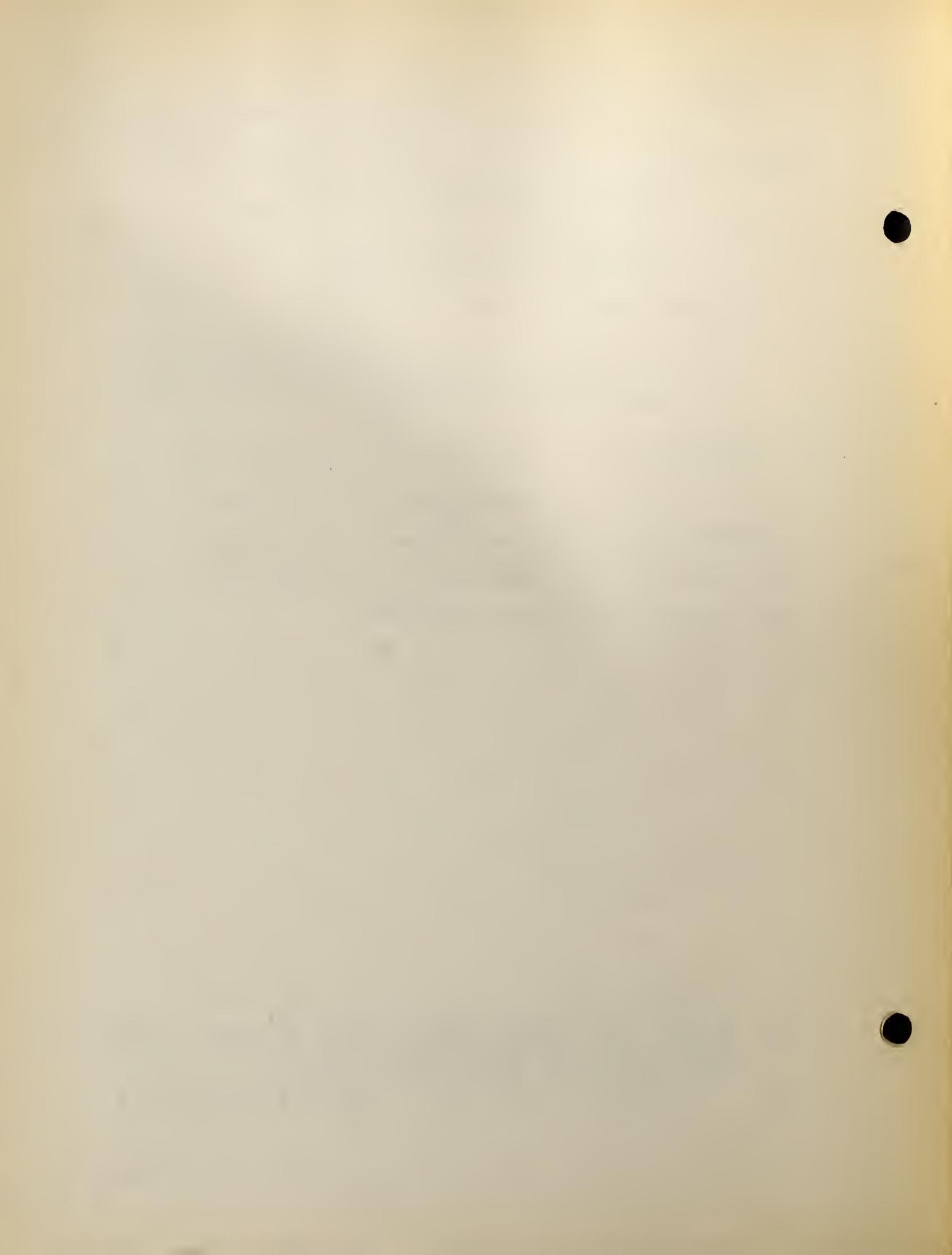
c. Summary of Will We have here, then, only four poets from whom we can quote  
(3)  
references to God as Will, and only a few quotations from them all. This, then, is not an ordinary way among these poets of interpreting God.

(1) Teasdale, III Lessons, Love Songs, p. 49.

(2) Masters, Captain John Whistler, from The Great Valley, p. 12  
Also p. 103 Spoon River, Amos Sibley

See also Robinson, Collected Poems, Merlin, p. 307

(3) S. Teasdale, R. Frost, E. L. Masters, E. A. Robinson.



#### 4. GOODNESS AND GOD

It is an interesting fact that the poets whom we are studying reveal very little of those lower ethical conceptions of God which were held by some of the Mediaeval and later poets, even as the prophets of the eighth century before Christ discarded the lower ethical conceptions of the Deity which had been held by their predecessors.

The quotations that we have obtained from these poets treat of the subject of Morality and God from two standpoints: first, the moral nature of God; and second, man as sharing God's moral nature;

The first side of the question does not especially interest these poets. My only quotations are two

a. A Moral  
God

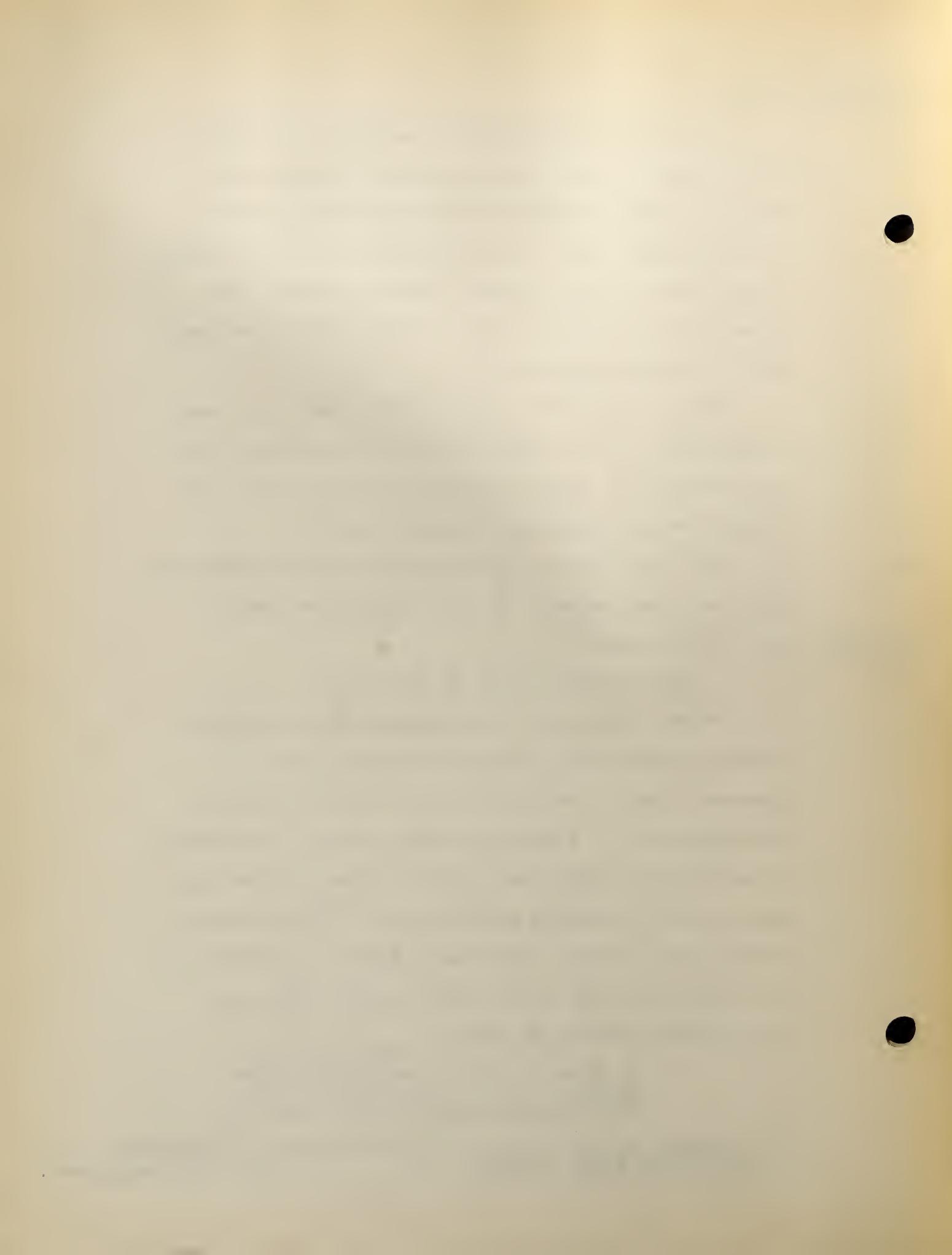
from Mr. Robinson:

"And if God be God, He is just."  
(1)

But the other one, from The Man Who Died Twice, is very illuminating. In this narrative poem Ferdinand Nash, a composer, lives a life of passion and degradation. Finally he burns his two symphonies, because he feels that they are not true-- he has not been living them while writing them. Then he goes on one last debauch, undergoes a sudden conversion, and spends the rest of his life beating a drum in the Salvation Army. He says,

"God was good  
To give my soul to me before I died  
Entirely, and He was more than just  
In taking all the rest away from me."  
(2)

(1) Children of the Night, p. 12. Not included in his latest book  
(2) Collected Poems, p. 955. (of Collected Poems.)



Man's  
Morality  
and God

However, this second aspect of the question is much more frequently presented. These poets often show God expecting and even demanding that man lead a good life.

(1)

Let us enumerate some of the moral qualities that these poets have presented as virtues which come from God.

(1) Truthfulness

Mr. Robinson pictures God as displeased with the "squeamish" crusade of the Church against Zola's naturalistic writings. He says that God wants us to know the Truth and to find in it the "divine heart of man";

"But he sees the human heart  
Of God meanwhile, and in His hand was weighed  
Your squeamish and emasculate crusade  
Against the grim dominion of his art.

Never until we conquer the uncouth  
Connivings of our shamed indifference  
(We call it Christian faith) are we to scan  
The racked and shrieking hideousness of Truth  
To find, in hate's polluted self-defence  
Throbbing, the pulse, the divine heart of man."

(2)

(2) Purity

Vachel Lindsay voices this prayer for purity to the Virgin,

"Scourge me, a slave that brings unhallowed praise  
To you, stern Virgin in this Church so sweet,  
If I desert the ways wherein my feet  
Were set by Heaven, in prenatal days."

(3)

and also this:

"Sweet Mary, make me clean."

(4)

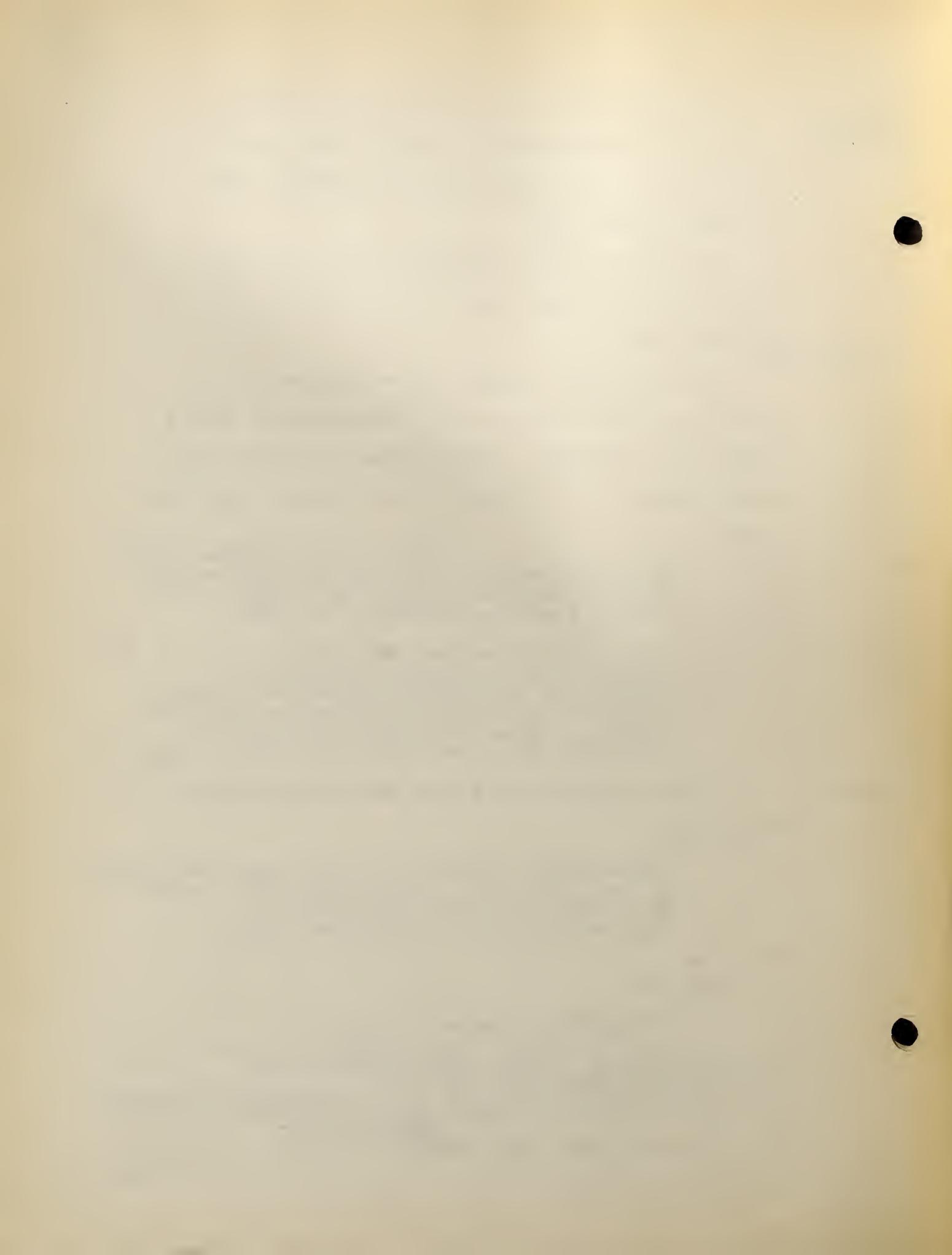
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(1) Masters, Spoon River, Mrs. Meyers, p. 23.

(2) Collected Poems, Zola, p. 85.

(3) Lindsay, Collected Poems, In the Immaculate Conception Church p. 306.

(4) Ibid., Look You, I'll Go Pray, p. 308.



(3) Courage

Courage is only one of many virtues that the Litany of the Heroes prays God to send.

"God send us Moses from his hidden grave  
God help us to be brave."

(1)

Carl Sandburg also associates courage with the idea of God in his poem Clean Hands.

"God it is something,  
One day of life so  
And a memory fastened till the stars sputter out  
And a love washed as white linen in the noon drying,

-----  
And O the great brave men, the silent little brave men,  
Proud of their clean hands."

(2)

(4) Industry

In The Proud Farmer we find the statement that

"The farm and house of God to him were one."

(3)

Evidently, his work was considered as part of his relation to God

(5) Sympathy

When Edna Millay reaches up to the sky and touches God, she feels pass over her a great wave of sympathy for those who suffer everywhere, and identifies it with God

"Mine, pity like the pity of God."

(4)

(6) Striving  
for the Ideal

Mr. Robinson feels that a paramount virtue in man is to strive unfailingly for the Ideal. No matter how great the failure, still man must work with God in this task,

"We dare not feel it yet- the splendid shame  
Of uncreated failure; we forget  
The while we groan, that God's accomplishment  
Is always and unfailingly at hand."

(5)

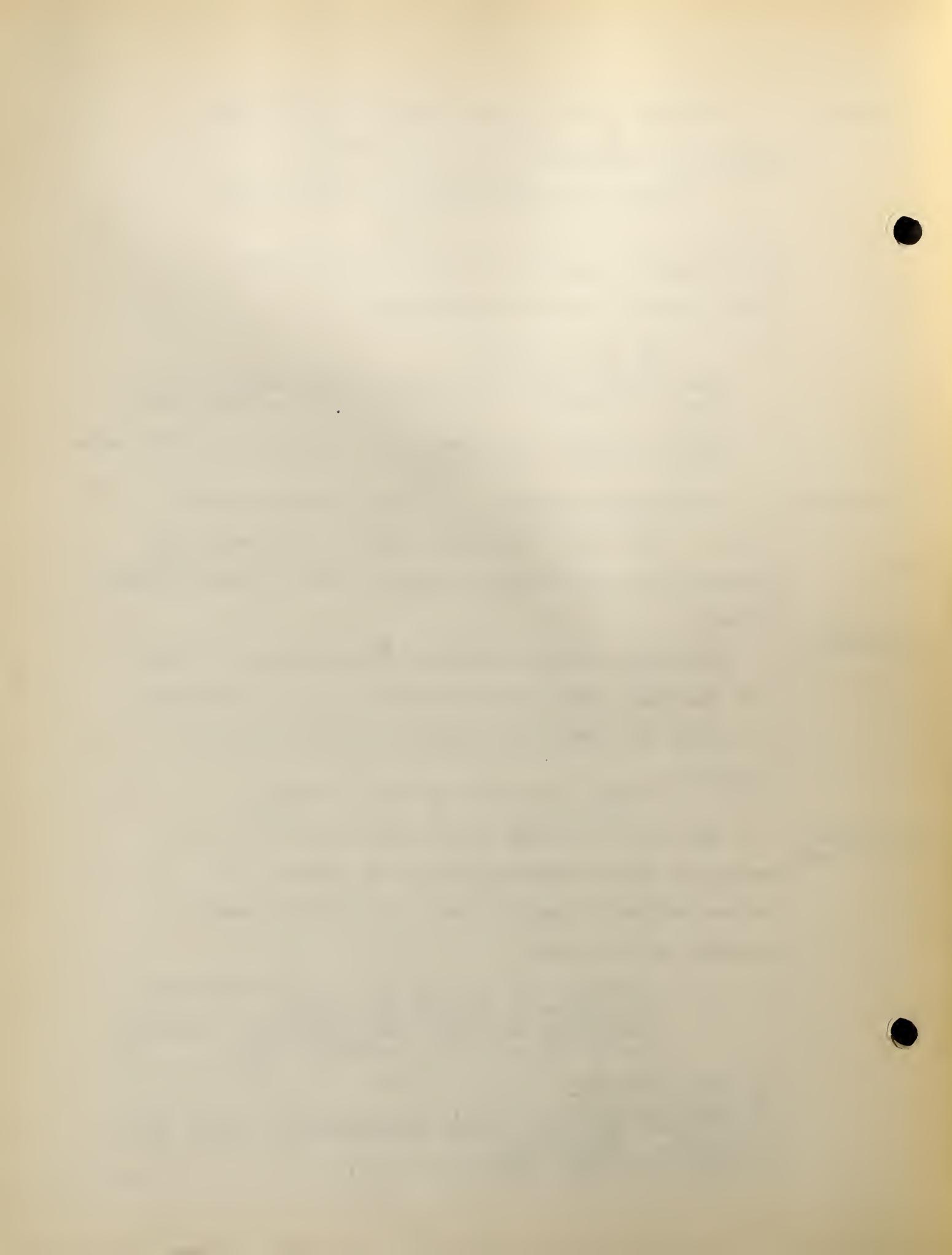
(1) Ibid., p. 187.

(2) Smoke and Steel, p. 100.

(3) Lindsay, Collected Poems, The Gospel of Beauty, p. 71.

(4) Millay, Renascence.

(5) Collected Poems, Octaves, p. 100.



This is sometimes called his "gospel of success through failure". Many of his narrative poems have it as a major or a minor theme. Perhaps we might say that the "Gleam" is the faith that men have through which they are enabled to keep on striving. Perhaps we might say it is man's conscience through which he knows the good from the bad plus his faith in the good. However we might word it, it is evident that it comes from a belief on Mr. Robinson's part that striving for the ideal is God's work, and that it is incumbent on man to assist Him.

When Launcelot goes back to Amesbury to get Genevieve to go to France with him, she says,

"I shall not come  
Between you and the Gleam that you must follow  
Whether you will or not."  
(1)

and at the end of the poem,

"But always in the darkness he rode on,  
Alone; and in the darkness came the Light."  
(2)

Shadrach O'Leary, John Brown, John Everdown,  
(3) (4) (5)  
are some of the other men whom Mr. Robinson shows us as following this Light of upward striving.

This same idea is put negatively by Mr. Kilmer in To Certain Poets. He evidently considers that (6) their writings are untrue to the vision, and therefore he is filled with contempt for them,

"Your tiny voices mock God's wrath."

(1) Ibid., Lancelot, p. 444.

(2) Ibid. Lancelot, p. 449. See also pp. 384; 437; 439.

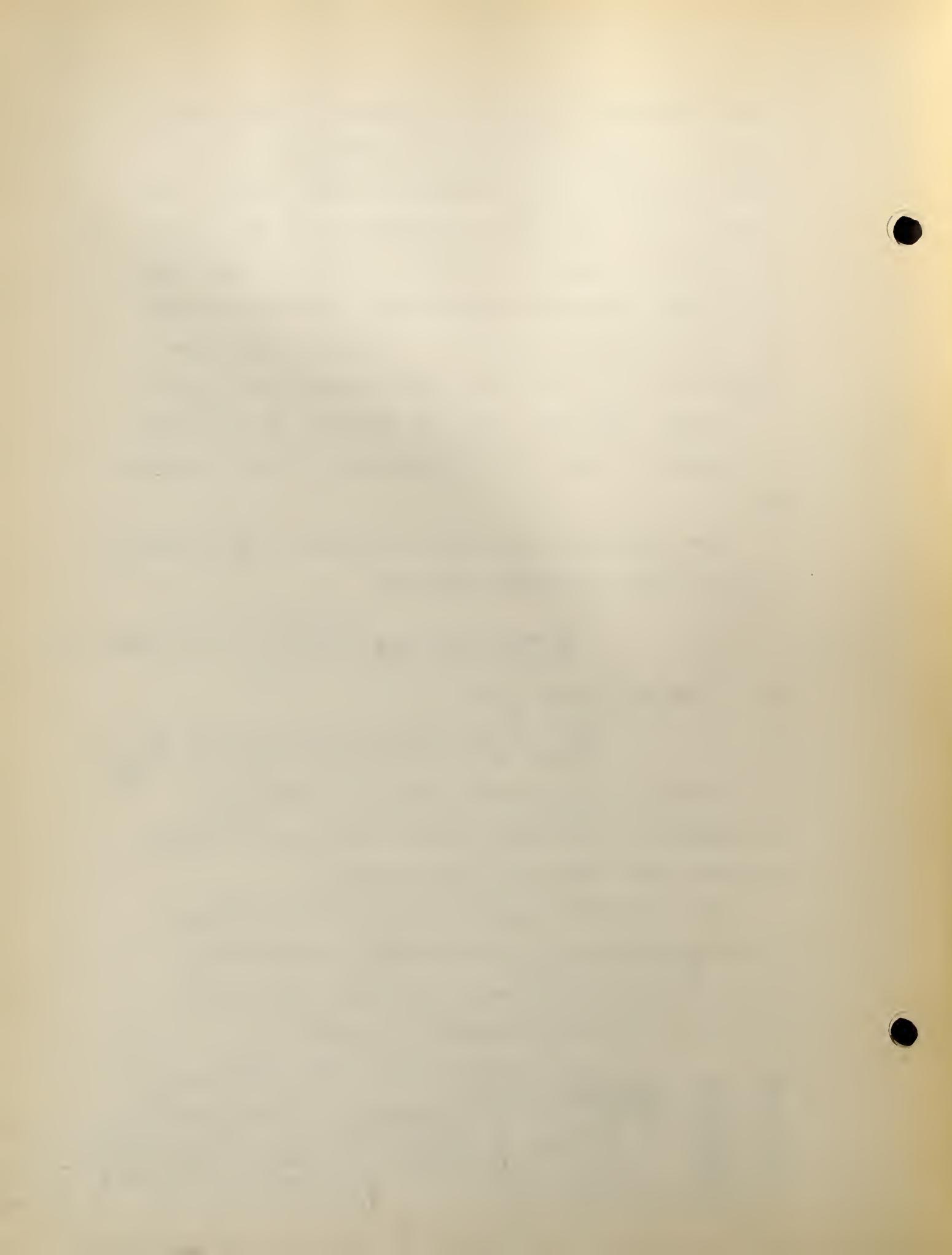
(3) Ibid., p. 345.

(4) Ibid. pp. 486, 489. Although this is a negative example, still,

(5) Ibid. p. 73. because in it morality is so definitely connected with God, we quote it here. John

(6) Trees and Other Poems, p. 45

Everdown has lead a wanton life, and he has felt that it has separated him from God: "God knows if I pray to be done with it all, But God is no friend to John Everdown."



c. God striving  
for righteousness Sometimes there is a tinge of the Old Testament  
God-of-battle idea in the way in which God is represented-  
ed as fighting for righteousness,

"The hand of God is sure and strong,  
Nor shall a man forever flee  
The bitter punishment of wrong  
The wrath of God is over me!"  
(1)

The same might be said of Mr. Lindsay's poem,  
King Arthur's Men Have Come Again written while a  
field-worker in the Anti-Saloon League of Illinois,

"Our God establishes his arm  
And makes the battle sure!"  
(2)

d. Summary  
of Goodness It will be noticed that about half of the quotations  
in this section have been found in Mr. Robinson's poems.  
(3)

By no means do we intend to insinuate that the other  
poets are not interested in morality. It is only  
when they have considered human morality as  
associated with God that their interest in  
the subject has come within the province of this  
thesis. Six others as before noted have also  
made that association, but no other has so persistently  
and with such conviction reiterated this idea that  
man's morality is identified with God.

(1) Ibid., The Fourth Shepherd, II, p. 58.

(2) Collected Poems, p. 377.

See also Kilmer, Trees and Other Poems, Stars, p. 20.  
and Amy Lowell, What's O'Clock, Folio de Minuit. Shows God selfish.

(3) Those quoted in this section are: Robinson, Lindsay,

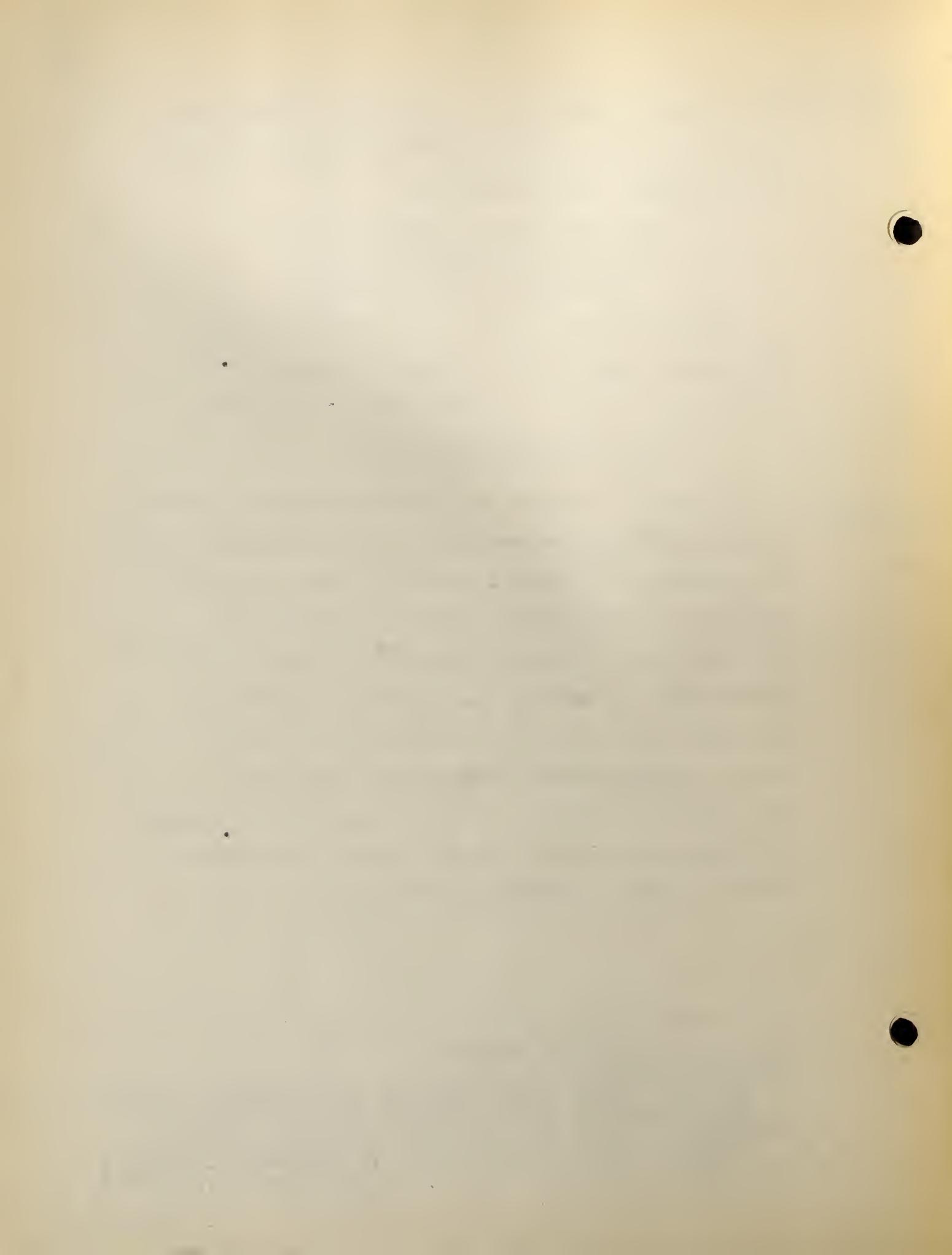
Kilmer, and one quotation each from Masters, Millay,  
Sandburg and Lowell; 25 in all.

Robinson 13 | 4. Masters 1

2. Lindsay 5 | 5. Millay 1

3. Kilmer 3 | 6. Sandburg 1

7. Lowell 1 (I am  
not at all certain that this  
belongs here.)



## 5. GOD AS LOVE

We come now to the comparatively modern idea of God as love. Sentiment being so much a part of human nature, it is only natural that love should find its way into modern poetical Theism.

In her Epigrams, H.D. presents the pagan god of love:

Love is my master  
you his lesser self;  
while you are Love,  
I love you generously,  
be Eros,

-----

You'd make a lion-winged god,  
frozen and contrite,  
of god up-darting,  
winged for passionate flight.

(1)

This is interesting as representing a primitive idea of religion. It puts concretely and humanly the love idea of God

b. Love at the  
World's Heart

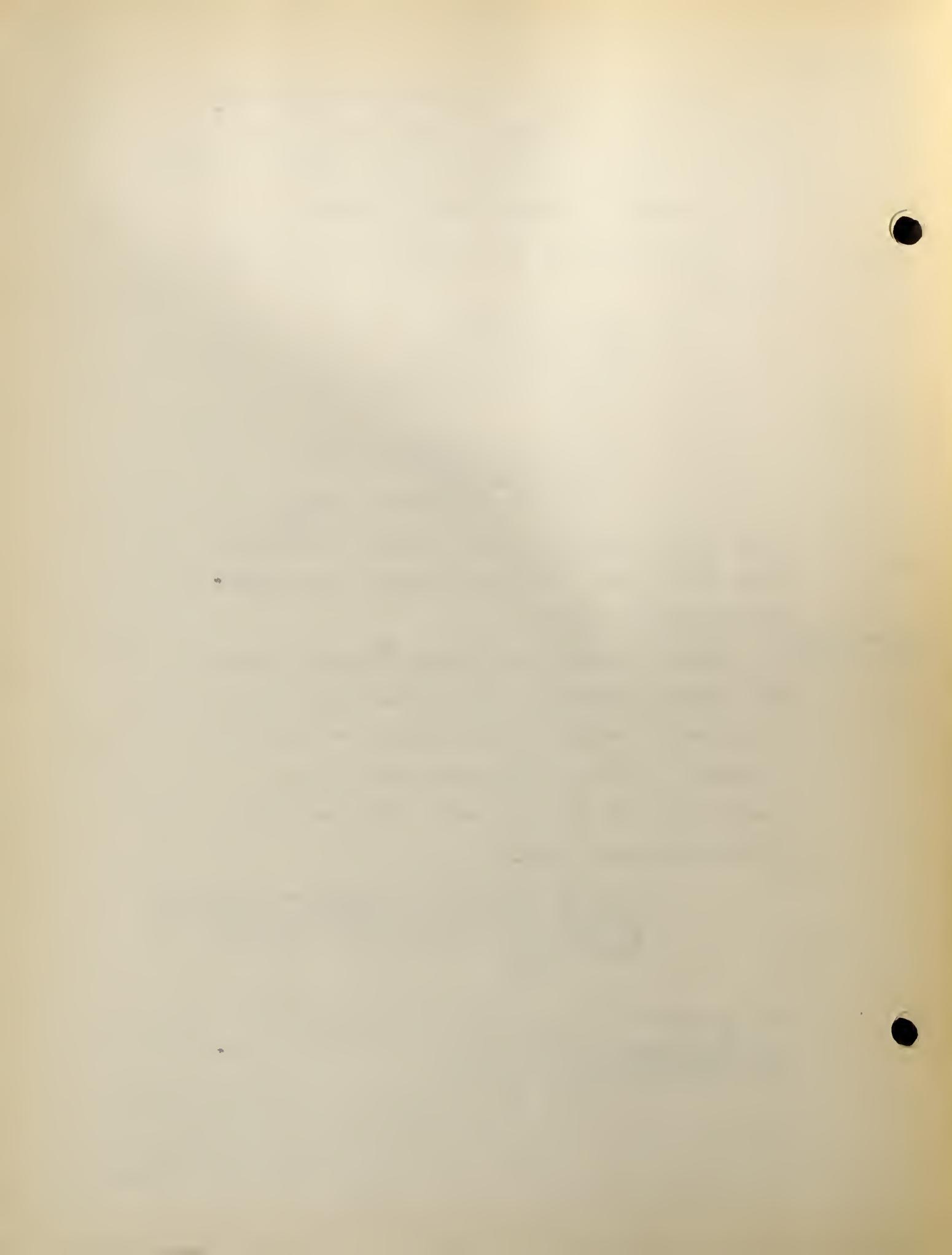
Robert Frost's poem, Two Look at Two, carries the idea that human love is a part of the great world-love. Two have been climbing the hill at nightfall, a startled doe sees them - and passes unscared along the wall. Then the buck follows likewise. And,

"A great wave from it going over them,  
As if the earth in one unlooked-for favor  
Had made them certain earth returned  
their love."

(2)

(1) Heliodora, p. 55.

(2) New Hampshire, p. 97.



c. From love  
to God

Human love leads Sara Teasdale toward God,

"But now I know between my God and me  
You stand forever, nearer God than I."  
(1)

Mr. Masters speaks positively of God as love  
in The Star.

"For I know you are Eternal Love  
And I can never escape you."  
(2)

While Mr. Robinson's idea in the following is clearly arrived at through intellectual conviction;

"the clear seer  
----sees beyond the groaning borough lines  
Of Hell, God's highway gleaming, and he knows  
That love's complete communion is the end  
Of anguish to the liberated man."  
(3)

In Robert Frost's Mending Wall the inference  
(4)

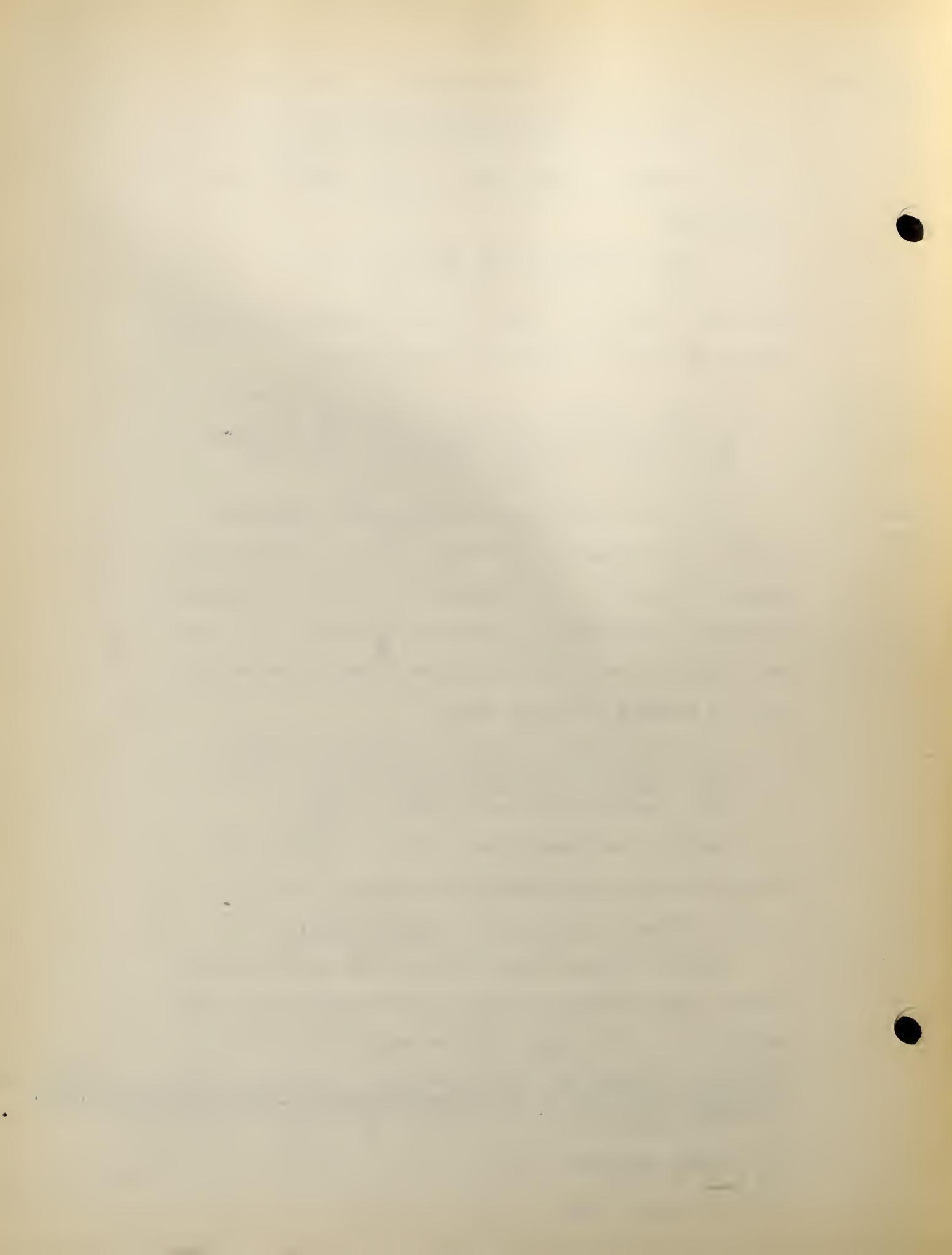
is that the forces of the world work against barriers built between men. This might be taken as a negative putting of the idea that love is universal. He has put this idea of God's love more directly and personally in Goodbye and Keep Cold:

"And think of an orchard's arboreal plight  
When slowly (and nobody comes with a light)  
Its heart sinks lower under the sod.  
But something has to be left to God."  
(5)

The Old Testament idea of God as holding the Jewish people especially in his love is seen in Vachel Lindsay's A Rhyme for all Zionites.  
(6)

But Mr. Lindsay seems to have caught the vision of the later Hebrew prophets, for he sees God's love extending to all people, and perhaps especially to

- (1) Rivers to the Sea, From the Sea. n. 123; see also p. 47 "Comforter"  
 (2) Songs and Satires, p. 171; Also Spoon River, Aaron Hatfield, p. 230.  
 (3) Collected Poems, Octaves XXII. p. 107; See also Sonnet I. p. 89  
 (4) Collected Poems, p. 47  
 (5) N.H. p. 94  
 (6) Collected Poems, p. 51.



those who might least expect it; The Drunkards in the Street. The City that will not Repent. all mankind.  
 (1) (2) (3)  
 Many of these poets picture God as loving very  
 (1) tenderly. Robert Frost says:  
 (4)

"And very beautifully God limns,  
 And tenderly life's little dream."  
 (5)

(a) As Father

In an allegorical poem by Edna Millay, - the suicide goes to his father's house and asks for a task. The implication is one of his duty to God as Father. More directly Mr. Lindsay speaks  
 (6) of himself as God's son,

"My God, my God, this marvelous hour  
 I am your son, I know."  
 (7)

And Elinor Wylie says in her Birthday Sonnet,

"Take home thy prodigal child, O Lord of Hosts!"  
 (8)

(b) As Mother

The mother side of God's love is implied by Amy Lowell in her story of the little orphan boy who prays to the Virgin for the safe return of a sailor who has been kind to him:

(1) Ibid., p. 289.

(2) Ibid., p. 311.

(3) Ibid., A Net to Snare the Moonlight, (What the Man of Faith saith) p. 52.

See also Teasdale, Love Songs, A Winter's Night, p. 81. And below, and Kilmer, Trees, Pennies, p. 18.

(3a)

and Masters, Spoon River, Elmer Karr, p. 173.

(4) Lindsay, Collected Poems, The Ghost of the Buffaloes, p. 81. See also Elinor Wylie, Trivial Breath, Hospes Comesque Corporis, p. 29.

"And the small soul's dissolving ghost  
 Must leave a heart shape in the dust  
 Before it is inspired and lost  
 In God: I hope it must."

(5) Frost, A Boy's Will, The Trial by Existence, p. 41.

See also, West Running Brook, p. 24;

Sandburg, Song bag (dedication)

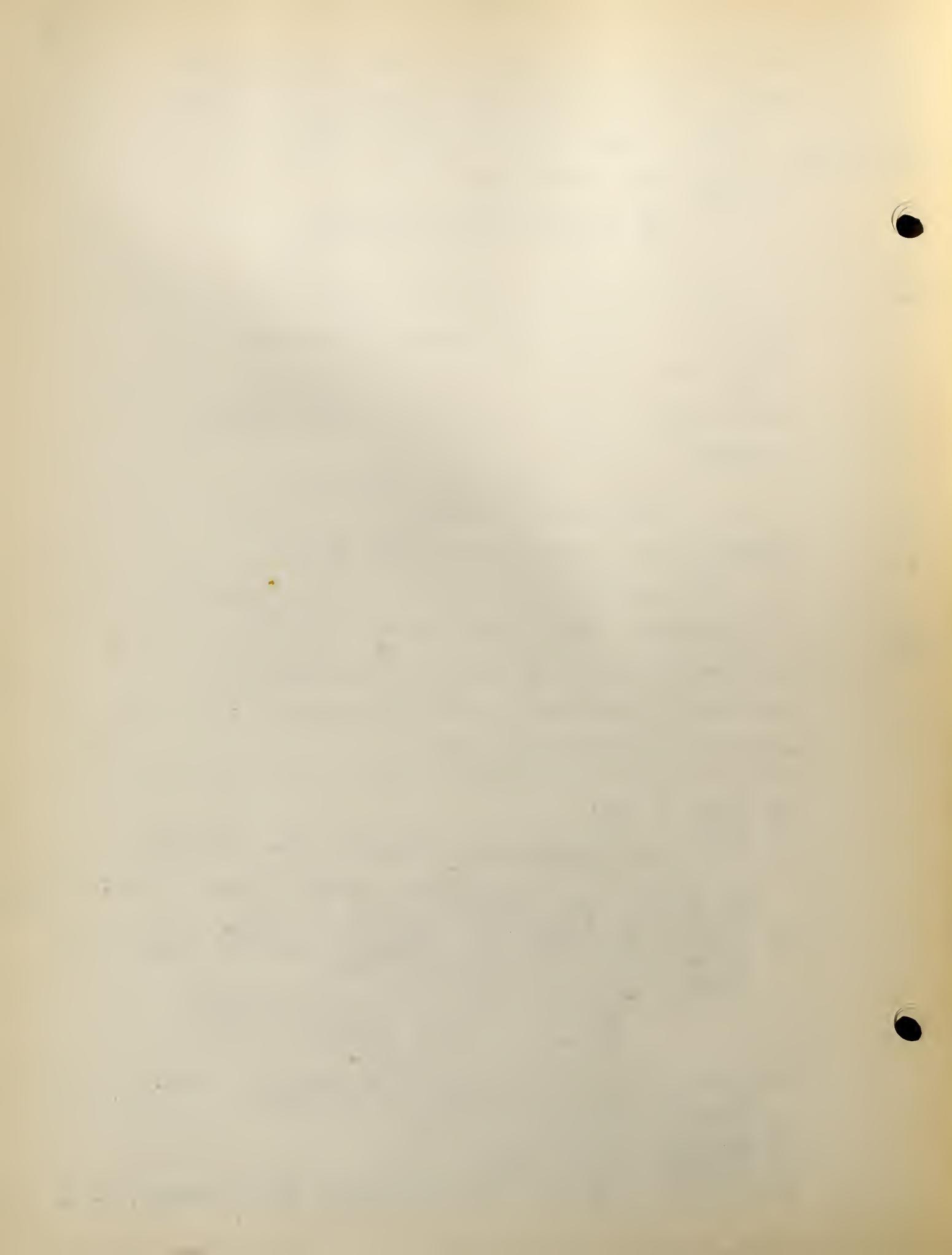
(6) Renaissance, The Suicide, p. 38.

(7) Collected Poems, A+ Mass, p. 308.

(8) Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry, p. 548.

(3a) See also Teasdale, Dark of the Moon, Midsummer Night, p. 54,

"I am ashamed, I have betrayed my Friend".



"Heavenly Lady, take away  
All the games I like to play  
----

Only bring him back once more."  
(1)

(2) God Loves Edgar Lee Masters has a keen sense of the pardoning love of God He cannot believe in eternal punishment.

"Whether we serve Thee ill or well,  
Thou knowest our frame, nor canst afford  
To leave Thy own for long in hell-  
Have mercy, Lord!"

(2)

"Yes, God forgives and men forget."  
(3)

Sacrificially Carl Sandburg has a steady conviction that sacrifice is worth while. Because he couples this idea with the name of the Deity in the following, we quote it here:

"God, let us remember all good losers,  
----

I could ask people to throw ashes on their heads  
In the name of that Sergeant at Belleau woods,  
Walking into the drumfires, calling his men  
'Come on, you--Do you want to live forever?'"  
(4)

The idea of God Himself as sacrificial is put more clearly by Mr. Robinson in Luke Havergal.

"God slays Himself with every leaf that flies."  
(5)

And Mr. Masters says it more of God personally here,

"Mother, my soul is weary, where is the  
way to God?"

"Well, kiss the crucifix, my son, and  
pass beneath the rod."  
(6)

(1) Sword Blades, Sancta Maria, p. 148.

(2) Masters, Songs and Satires, Supplication, p. 122

(3) Kilmer, Trees, To a Young Poet Who Killed Himself, p 39  
See also Ibid, Citizen of the World, p. 55;  
and also Masters, Spoon River, Julia Miller, p. 32.

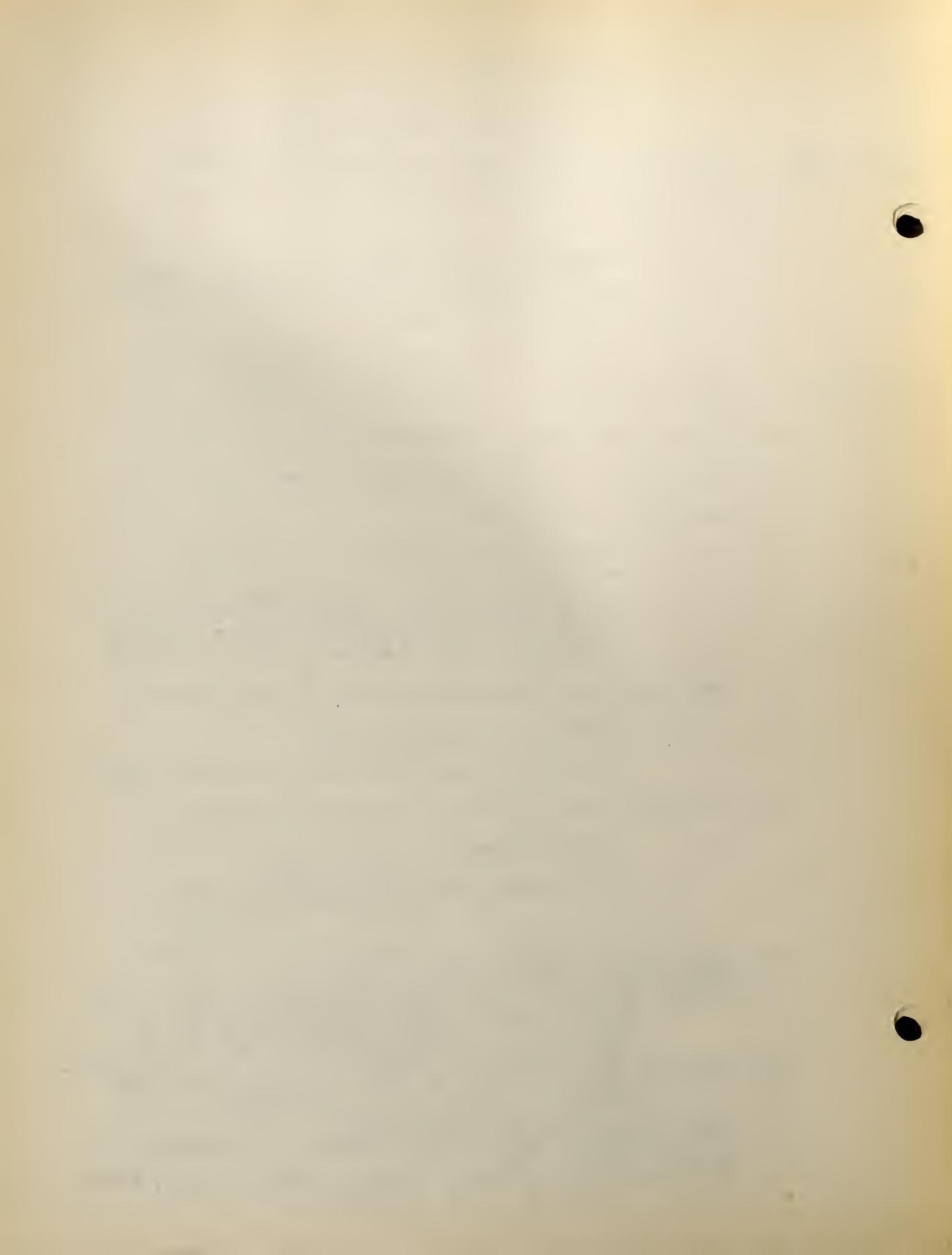
(4) Sandburg, Smoke and Steel, Losers, p. 87; See also below.

(5) Collected Poems, p. 74; See also Children of the Night  
p. 12. "The cloak that hides the scar.",

(6) Songs and Satires, The Helping Hand, p. 120.

See also Kilmer, Main Street, The Robe of Christ, p. 43;  
The New School, p. 74.

(3) Sandburg, Smoke and Steel, Night's Nothings Again, p.249.



(a) Christ as  
Sacrifice

Because sometimes Christ is presented  
in these poems as a symbol of sacrificial love,  
I have grouped some of these references here.

Christ in this sense may be taken as an aspect  
of God.

Carl Sandburg's recurrent note of the eleva-  
tion of sacrifice is here coupled with Christ.

"Did I see a crucifix in your eyes  
and nails and Roman soldiers  
and a dusk Golgotha?  
Did I see Mary, the changed woman  
washing the feet of all men,  
clean as new grass  
when the old grass burns?

(1)

We have found several references to this idea  
in Joyce Kilmer's poems. St Lawrence, unarmed, pro-  
tects the murdered Pope in the broken Vatican. He  
is killed by the mob, and his reward is a martyr's  
death.

(2)

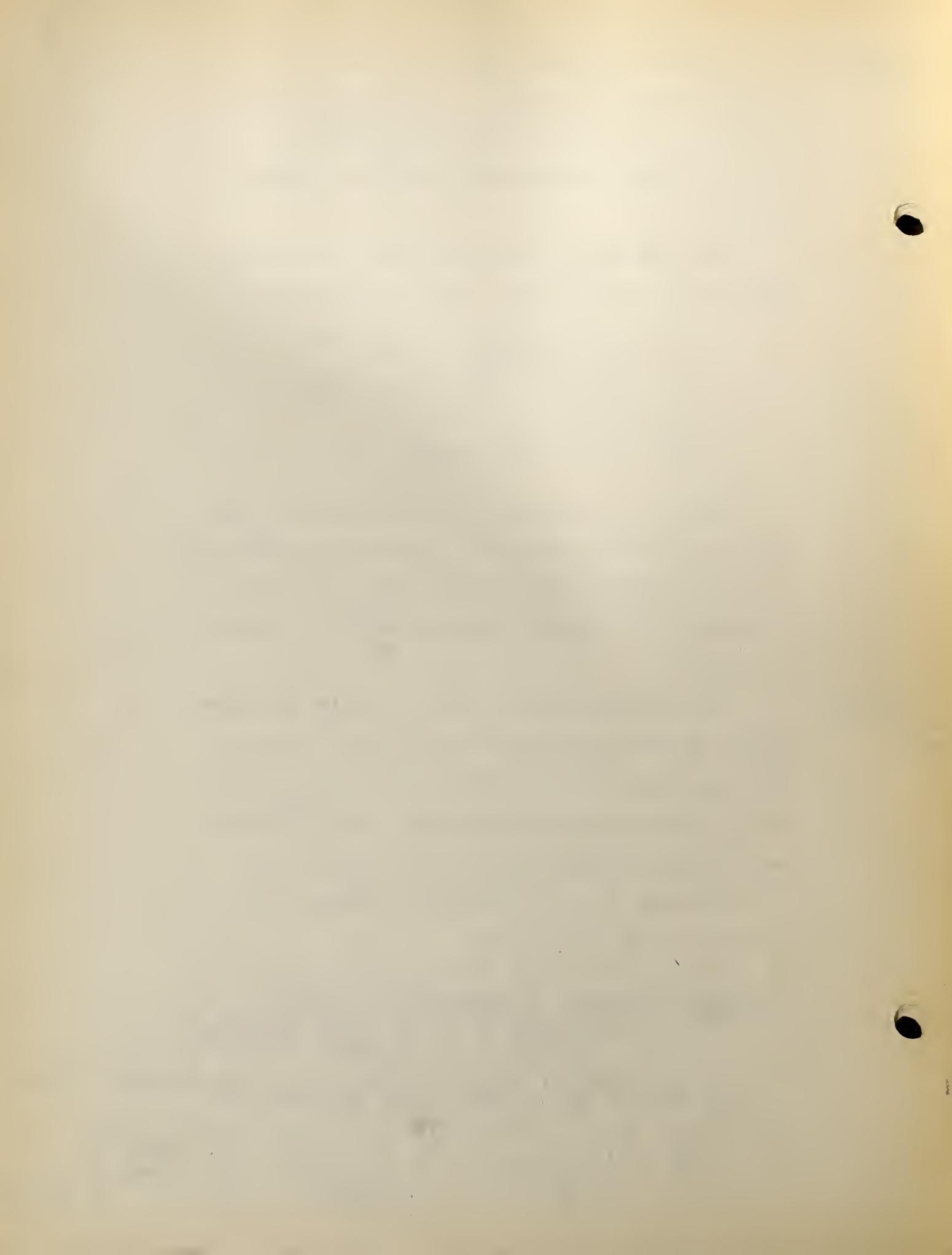
We see, then, that all but Mr. Eliot of these  
modern American poets present in their poetry in  
one way or another the idea of God as love. Many  
(3)  
of them dwell upon the idea often. It evidently  
means much to them, and they have various ways  
of expressing it, and continually turn to it as  
something they wish to say.

(1) Smoke and Steel, Crimson Changes People, p. 42.

(2) Trees, St Lawrence, p. 36; see also Pennies, p. 18;  
and Stars, p. 20; Poems from France,  
Holliday, pp. 108, 109

See also Lindsay, Collected Poems, Two Easter Stanzas, p. 278.  
and Masters, Spoon River, Emily Sparks, p. 15.

(3) We have in this section 47 quotations referring to God  
as Love: 1. Kilmer 12 5. Robinson 4 9. Lowell 1  
2. Lindsay 7 6. Sandburg 4 10. Millay 1  
3. Masters 7 7. Teasdale 3 11. H. D. 1(pagan)  
4. Frost 5 8. Wylie 2



## 6. GOD AS CREATOR

The idea of God as First Cause, or Creator, has never been absent from man's idea of God, and in the poets whom we are studying that conviction is very evident and the method of approach has a wide range.

Vachel Lindsay presents God as working through

a As Creator  
of the Physical      the seasons      In speaking of the spring, he  
World

says:

(1)

"By her our God began to build  
Began to sow and till".

and then each other season is presented as belonging to God. Joyce Kilmer writes,

"Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree".

(2)

Carl Sandburg speaks of "God's Night Wind".

(3)

b. As Creator      Over and over again in his dramatic poems, Mr. of man Robinson makes his characters speak of God as Creator

of man. Alexander says to Genevieve,

(4)

"Say why it is that little tongue of yours  
Which God gave you to talk with--"

(5)

and also,

'Why not paint herrings, Rembrandt,  
Or if not herrings, why not split beef?  
----

The same God planned and made you, beef and human".

(6)

Carl Sandburg also hints at the idea that God has created man with a spiritual nature when he speaks thus,

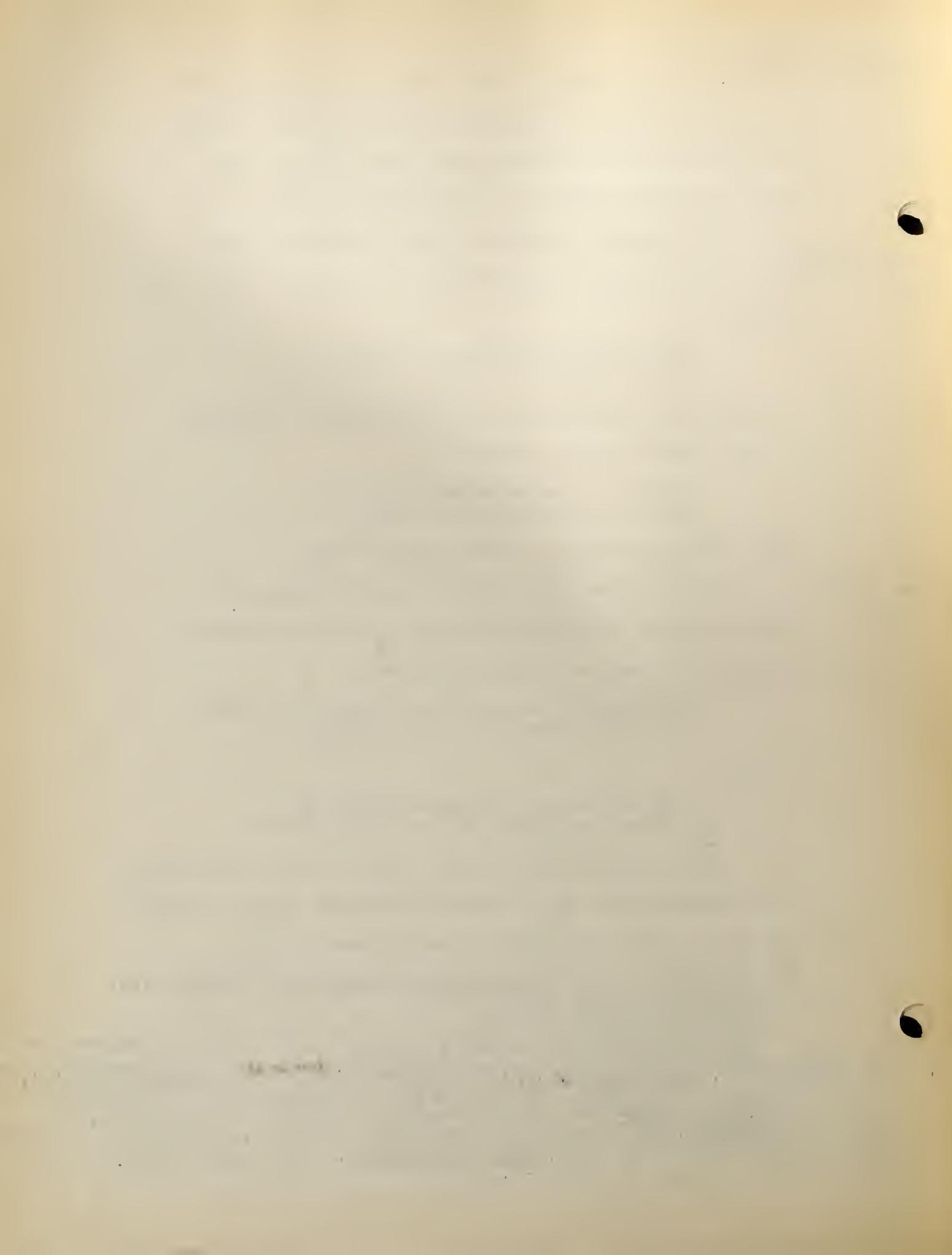
(1) Collected Poems, Sweethearts of the Year. Spring. p. 199.

(2) Trees and Other Poems, p. 19.

(3) Smoke and Steel, p. 224;

(4) Collected Poems, Cavender's House, p. 969: "hv God madesuch men".

(5) Ibid. Geniveeve and Alexandra, p. 873 (6) Ibid. Rembrandt to Rembrandt, p. 589.  
See also Kilmer, Main Street, p. 48, and Wyllie, Angels and Earthly Creatures; The following tell little of God. The first two might be called "conventional phrase": p. 50, To a Cough - "God rest you--God cure your cold;" and p. 62, To a Lady's Countenance, "God's power has disdained to mould". And this one speaks more of man than of God: p. 38, This Corruptible, (The spirit of man speaks to man), "O grain of God in power--".



"Hunted and hissed from the center  
 Deep down long ago when God made us over,  
 Deep down are the cinders we came from-  
 You and I and our heads of smoke."

and then again,

"Some of the smokes God dropped on the job".  
 (1)

Man's spiritual nature as a result of God's creative act is voiced perhaps more surely by Edgar Lee Masters in the following:

"His soul is now required, is taken away  
 From living waters, in a little day  
 Thrift, labor dooms him, leaves him banqueting  
 Where nothing nourishes, they are the sting  
 Which deadens him and casts him down at last  
 Flyblown or numb or lifeless in this vast  
 Surrounding air of Vital Power, where God  
 Like the great Sun, invites the wayside clod  
 To live at full."

(2)

c. Different ways of Regarding the Creator God These poets seem to be little concerned about God's method of creating. This one quotation from Masters stands alone here:

(1) As Creat-ing through the World Process.

"You knew then, starting let us say with ether,  
 You would become electrons, out of whirling  
 Would arise atoms: then as an atom resting  
 Till through yourself in other atoms moving  
 And by the fine affinity of power  
 Atom with atom amassed, you would go on-"  
 (3)

(2) As Light

Light is a natural symbol of the source of life, and we find Mr. Robinson speaking of God as fire,

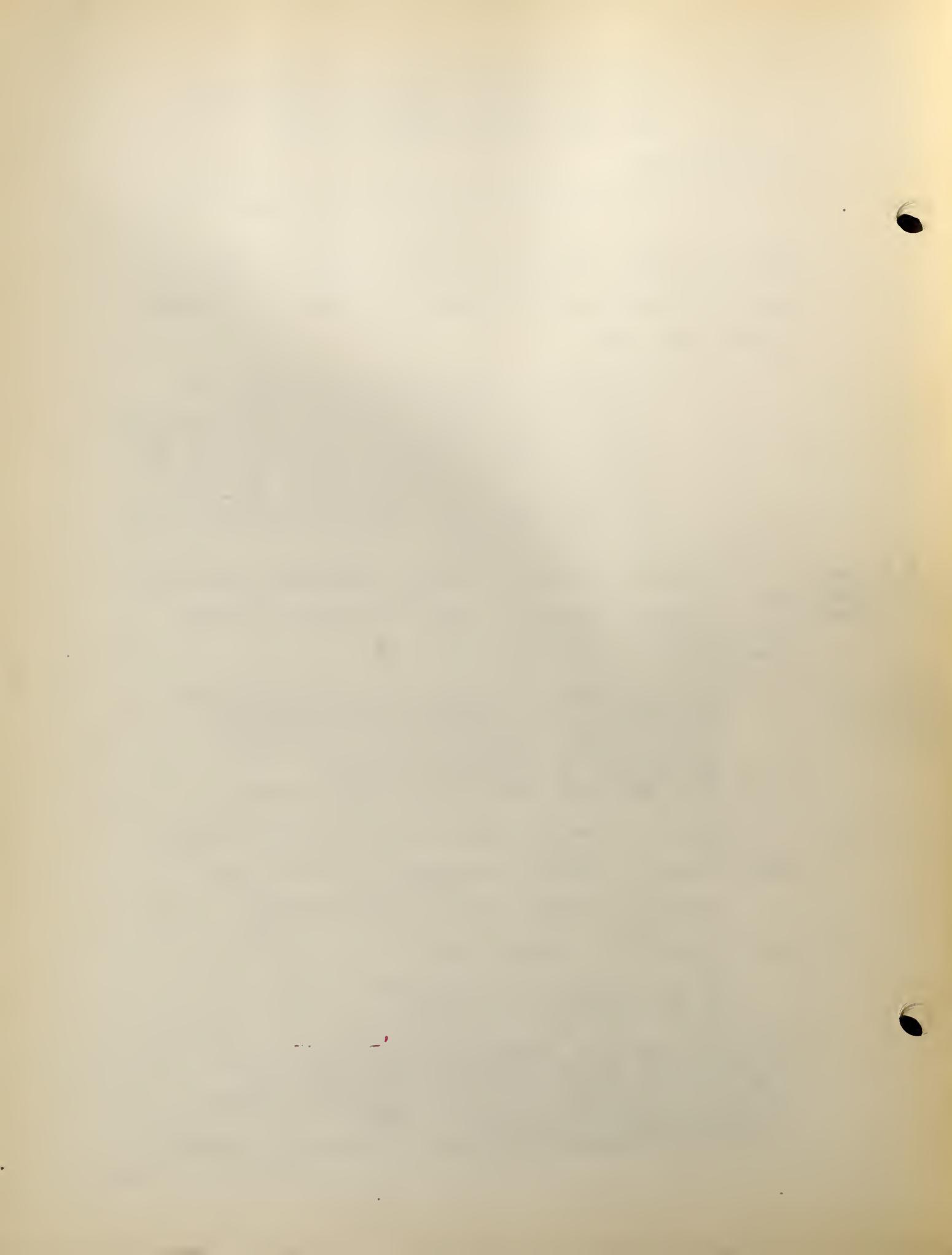
"Almost as if the fire of God had failed."  
 (4)

In like manner Mr. Masters says,

"If none of our infatuate souls  
 Sip the bright fire of God?"

(5)

- 
- (1) Smoke and Steel, Smoke and Steel, p. 1.  
 (2) The Great Valley, The Typical American, p. 69.  
 (3) Songs and Satires, The Conversation, p. 125.  
 (4) Collected Poems, Sonnet, Not Always, -I, p. 887.  
 (5) The Great Valley, Bombyx, p. 217.  
 See also Songs and Satires, Supplication, p. 122.



(3) As Ruler Vachel Lindsay's poems speak of many diverse things as belonging to God. He speaks of "the grave paths of God" in the sky; of the city as belonging to God: the  
(1) perfect marriage as "brought from our God". Joyce Kilmer  
(2) (3) has something the same way of ascribing the ownership of almost everything to God. Mr. Robinson speaks of "the  
(4) freedom that God gave us", and Sara Teasdale says:  
(5)

(a) Control-  
ling From  
Afar

Often God is spoken of as transcendent:

"as if through heaven's door  
I watched the world from God's unshaken seat".  
(7)

And again,

"We look down on them as God must look down  
On constellations floating under Him,  
Tangled in clouds--"  
(8)

Joyce Kilmer has a somewhat similar way of presenting God as separate from the world.

"And that God's on His throne in the sky." (9)

Perhaps there is similarly an idea of the distance of God in the following quotation from Robert Frost,

(1) Collected Poems, The Path of the Sky, p. 240

(2) Ibid., The Soul of the City Received the Gift of God. p. 207.

(3) Ibid., The Perfect Marriage, p. 272. See also pp. 274, 287, 202, 117. See also Rivers to the Sea, p. 118, with much pessimism, therefore O Flame and Shadow, The Sanctuary, p. 118. Ibid., The Broken Field, p. 47.

(4) Trees and Other Poems, pp. 14, 16; Main Street, p.p. 54,  
46; 15; 20; 60; 77.

(5) Collected Poems, The Wilderness, p. 100

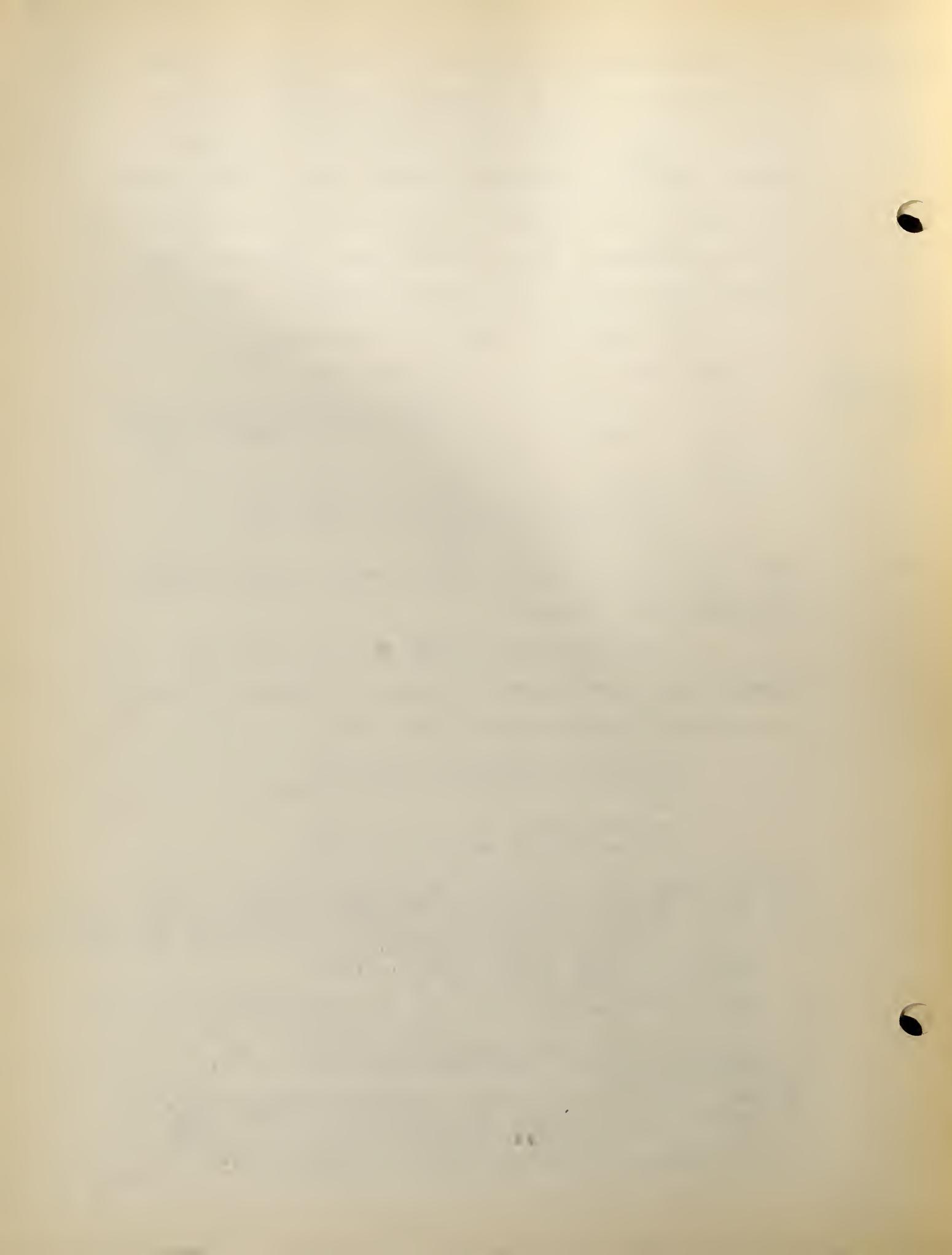
(6) Rivers to the Sea, The Mother of a Poet, p. 77.

(7) Ibid., p. 102.

(8) Sara Teasdale, Love Songs, A November Night, p. 87.

(9) Trees and Other Poems, Old Poets, p. 23; See also  
Le Gai Sienne Book, Old Poets, p. 345

(10) West-Running Brook, Sitting by a Bush, p. 59.



(b)  
Governing  
by Laws

In his poem, The Gospel of Mark, Masters presents a God whose whole universe is governed by laws,

"Do you say God is living, that this world  
These constellations, move by law, that all  
This miracle of life and light is held  
In harmony, and that the soul of man  
Moves not in order?--  
No, it cannot be.

Man's soul, the chiefest flower of all we know  
Is not the toy of malice or of sport."

(1)

Sometimes the Creator Ruler of the world is represented as guiding with a loving hand:

"God speeds us whereso e'er we go."  
(2)

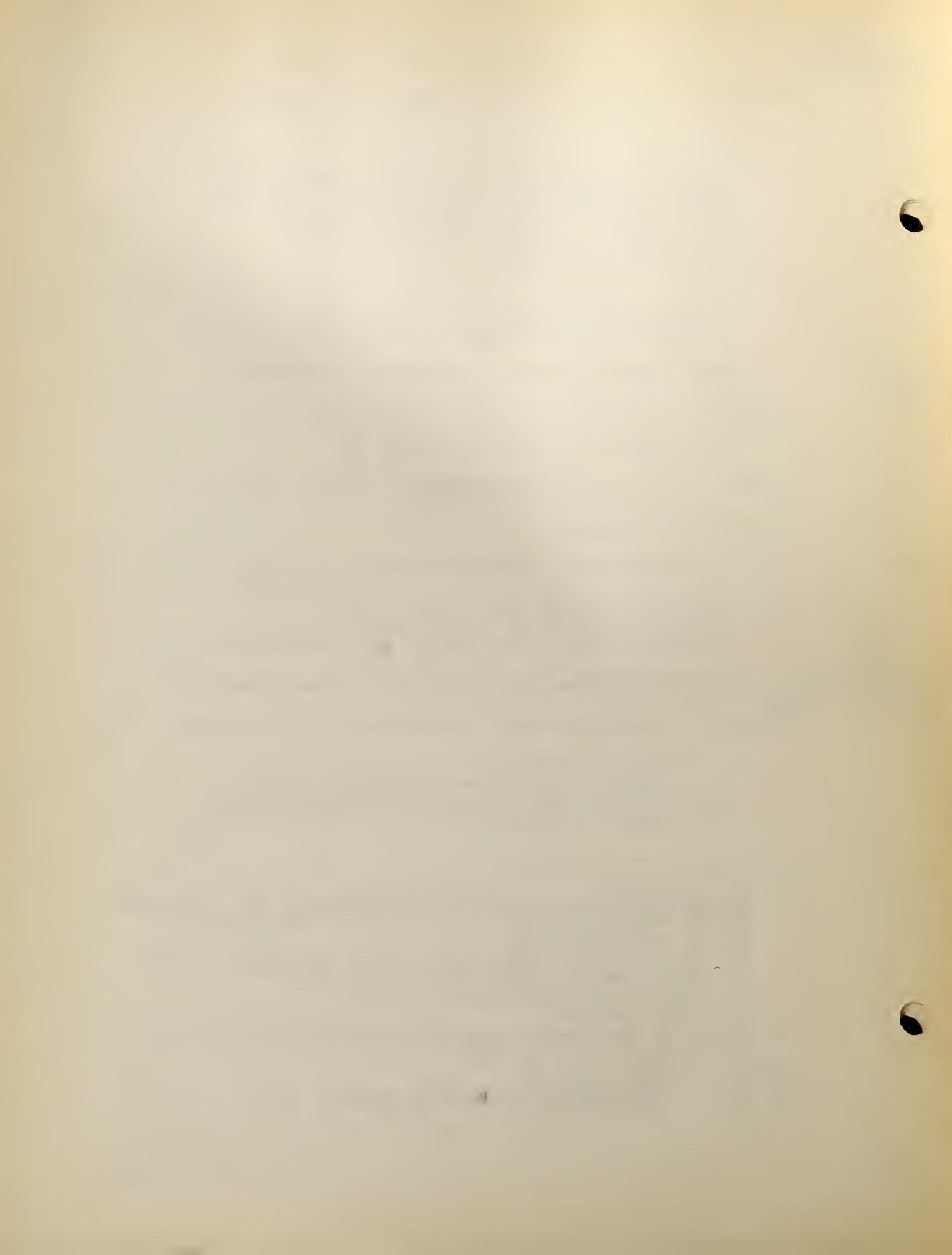
Robert Frost's poem, My Butterfly, has this idea of the Creator's care;

"It seemed God let thee flutter from his  
gentle clasp;  
Then fearful he had let thee win  
Too far beyond him to be gathered in,  
Snatched thee, o'er eager, with ungentle grasp."  
(3)

(d)  
Ruling with  
Power and Majesty  
The mighty power of God is one of the ideas contained in the following quotation from Joyce Kilmer:

"I would possess a host of lovely things  
But I am poor and such joys may not be.  
So God who lifts the poor and humbles kings  
Sent loveliness itself to dwell with me."  
(4)

- (1) The Great Valley, The Gospel of Mark, p. 152 See also Songs and Satires, p. 125, "find the law through which your soul, etc. See also Robinson, Collected Poems, Mortmain p. 894; "----who knows if there may not be laws Harder for us to vanquish or evade Than any tyrants?"
- (2) Joyce Kilmer, Trees, The Twelve Forty-Five, p. 16; Robinson, p. 94; p. 322.
- (3) A Boy's Will, p. 60.
- (4) Kilmer, The Le Gallienhe Book, Wealth, p. 346.



As a corollary to this idea of God as a mighty Ruler comes that of His majesty. Amy Lowell's bald lines in her poem, The Sisters, contains this thought. She is discussing the necessity for Emily Dickinson's hidden life.

"Whose fault?----

----- Queen Victoria's

I feel obliged to mention Martin Luther  
And behind him the long line of Church Fathers  
Who draped their prudence like a dirty cloth  
about the naked majesty of God."

(1)

This same idea of the majesty of God is found in Joyce Kilmer's poem, Poets,

"They shall not live who have not tasted death,  
They only sing who are struck dumb by God."

(2)

d. Other Allied Ideas of the Creator. It is only a step from God as the Source and Creator

of all to God as the Author of the Bible.

"From books our God has written."

says Vachel Lindsay.

(3)

There are also doctrinal ideas mixed up in the airy fancy of this little child poem:

"The sun says his prayers, said the fairy,  
For strength to climb up through the sky.  
He leans on invisible angels,  
And faith is his prop and his rod.  
The sky is his crystal cathedral,  
The dawn is the altar of God."

(4)

God is presented as sending trials to man for his development in the poem, Pennies, by Joyce Kilmer,

"So unto men  
Doth God, depriving that he may bestow."

(5)

\* (1) What's O'Clock, The Sisters. See also (la)

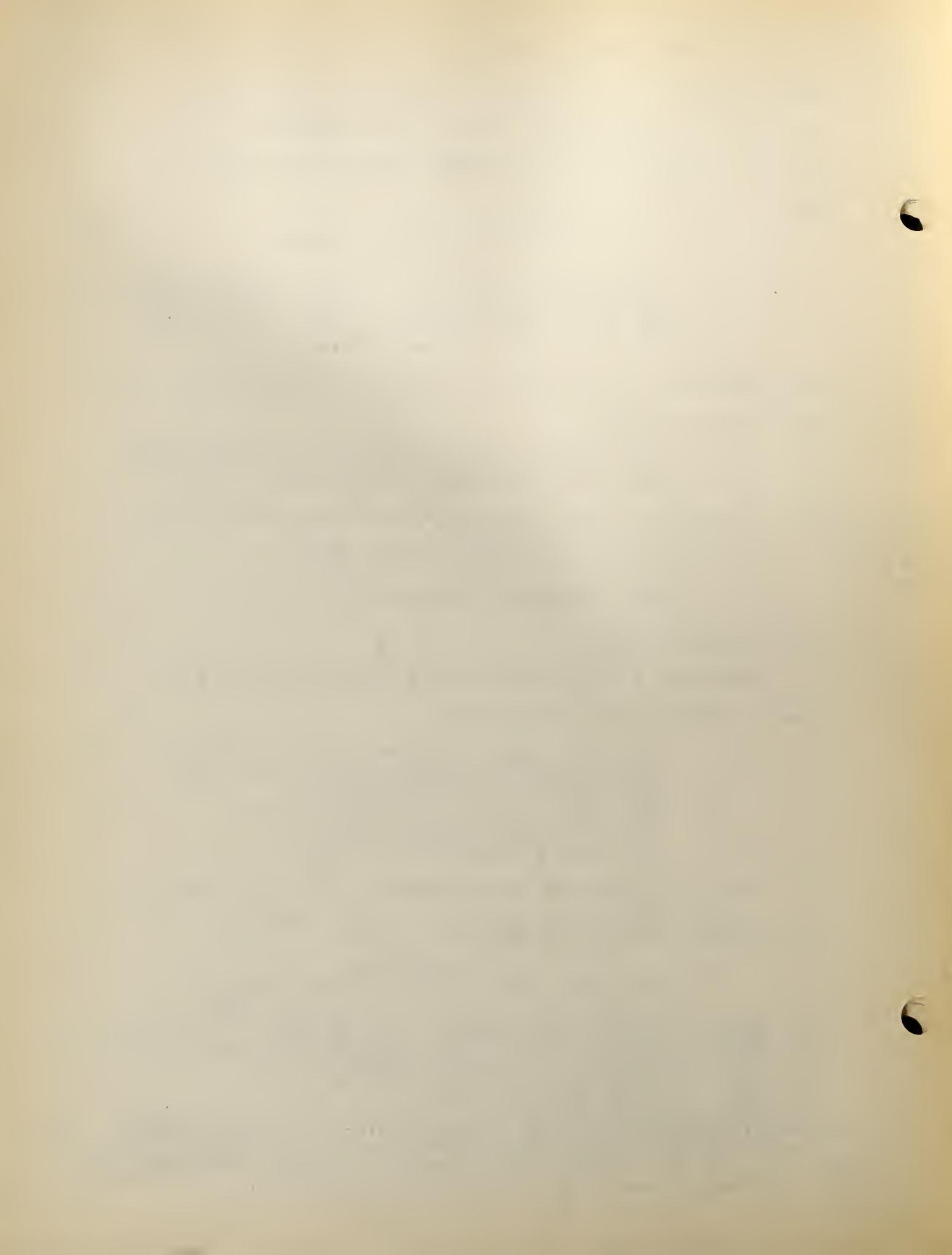
(2) Monroe and Henderson, p. 225; Main Street, Kings, p. 73; p. 52.

(3) Collected Poems, Our Guardian Angels, p. 378.

(4) Ibid., The Sun Says his Prayers, p. 68.

(5) Trees and Other Poems, p. 17.

(la) Lowell, Pictures of the Floating World, p. 179, Ely Cathedral. This is a mordant satire against the Church and the way in which people worship. We put the reference here because the words "expurgated God" imply that God is more than men usually consider Him.



Perhaps there is something of the idea that God is pleased with suffering in Carl Sandburg's Flash Crimson.

"I shall cry God to give me a broken foot..."  
(1)

And one might see a glimpse of a God who exacts recompense in Amy Lowell's A Rhyme of the Motley.

This is also an Old Testament idea of God, which is found before the time of the Prophets

"I grasped a silver thread; it cut me to the bone,  
----

I reached for a heart, and touched a raw blade-  
And this was the bargain God had made  
For a little gift of speech."  
(2)

<sup>e</sup> Summary We have found, then, eight of our poets referring to God as Creator as the Creator of the world. Perhaps some of it is a surprise to find the more doctrinal ideas presented not only by Joyce Kilmer and Vachel Lindsay, but also by the liberals, Carl Sandburg and Amy Lowell. All of these poets except H. D., T. S. Eliot, and Edna Millay have spoken of the Creator God in one way or another, (although the quotations from Elinor Wylie do not seem to carry much meaning.)

(See note p. 26.) But on the whole these poets have spoken of this aspect of God with considerable assurance. It is sometimes almost as if He is taken for granted. It will be noticed by the footnote (3) that we have found more references to Him in this section than in any other, and that here more than half of our quotations are from two of the poets (Lindsay and Kilmer); and that three-quarters of the number come from one-third of the poets (Kilmer, Lindsay, Robinson and Masters).

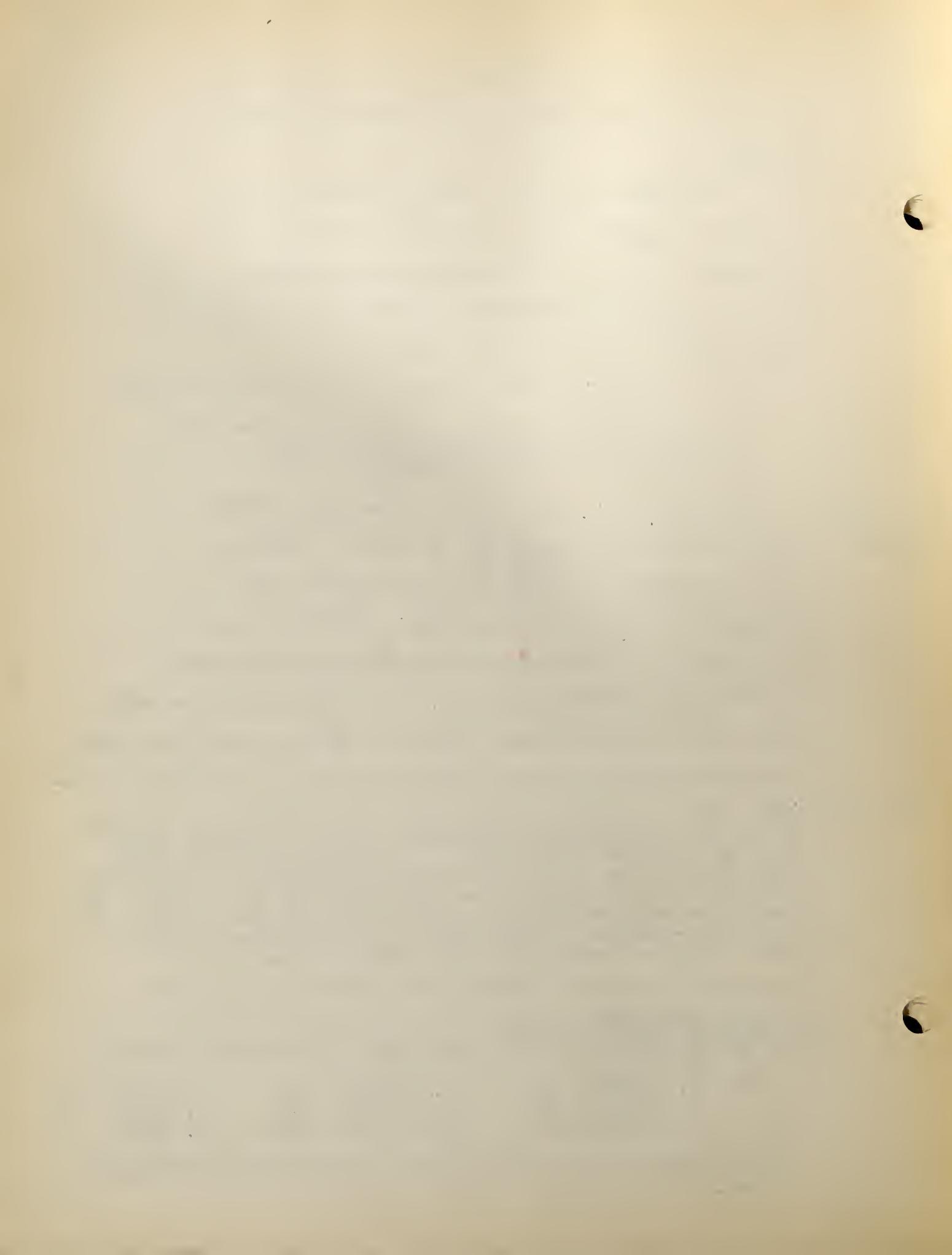
(1) Smoke and Steel, p 83.

\* (2) What's O'Clock, p 201.

(3) We have listed in this section 60 quotations referring to the Creator God:

1. Kilmer	19	4. Masters	6	7. Frost	2
2. Lindsay	10	5. Sandburg	3	8. Lowell	3*
3. Robinson	8	6. Teasdale	3(3)	9. Wylie	3*

Those marked \* are of little constructive value to the idea of God.



TABULATION OF  
QUOTATIONS CONTAINING THE IDEA OF GOD

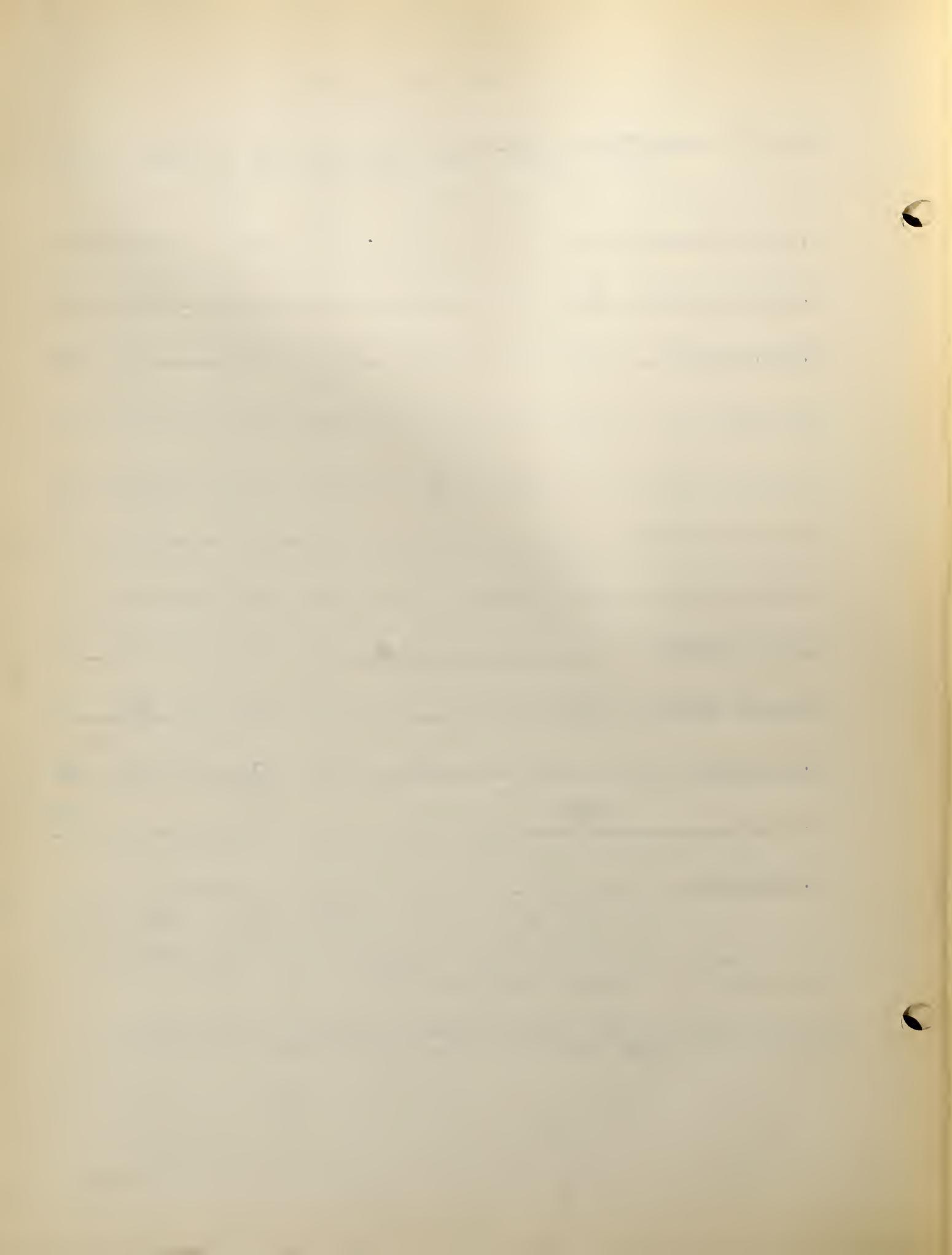
The no. of quotations of God as:

	BEAUTY	TRUTH	WILL	GOODNESS	LOVE	CREATOR	TOTAL
1.Joyce Kilmer	11			3	12	19	45
2.Vachel Lindsay	2	2		5	7	10	26
3.E.A.Robinson	3	5	1	13	4	8	34
4.E.L.Masters	1	3	2	1	7	6	20
5.Robert Frost	1	1	2		5	2	11
6.Sara Teasdale	2		2		4	3	11
7.Edna Millay	6	1		1	1		9
8.Carl Sandburg				1	4	3	8
9.Elinor Wylie	3*				2	3*	8
10.Amy Lowell				1*	1	3*	5+
11. H. D.	pagan	2			1		pagan
12.T.S.Eliot							
	31	12	7	25	48	60	183

Those marked \* contribute little or nothing to the idea of God.

Those marked O contain much pessimism.

Over four and one half times as many references to the idea of God are made by the first six as by the last six.



## 7. THE MINOR NOTE

In view of the fact that only half of these poets have spoken of God frequently, as shown by the tabulation on page thirty-two, and in view of the fact that this half alone have spoken of Him with much assurance, as shown by our text up to this point, and furthermore, in view of the fact that this body of poetry contains certain recurrent strains (paganism, skepticism, materialism, pessimism, and fatalism) that would seem to point to even less assurance in regard to Him than the references themselves would indicate, it seems fitting at this point to turn to a reinvestigation of our material to see whether through these strains something more has been said about Him, something that adds to or detracts from what we have recorded heretofore.

These strains of paganism, materialism, skepticism, pessimism and fatalism are very evident in this poetry, and it is easy to see that in general these strains run heaviest in the poetry of those who have said least about God (as summarized in our tabulation).

A complete study of the aforesaid strains does not belong to this thesis; it is only when they have a bearing on the idea of God that we are concerned with them. For convenience in terminology I have called these strains collectively the "Minor Note", and we will now proceed to discuss them in their relation to the idea of God in the work of these twelve poets.

(

C

a. Two Poets  
Who Have Not  
the Minor Note

I have found among these twelve poets two in whose poetry there is no trace of the Minor Note; Vachel Lindsay and Joyce Kilmer.

(1) Vachel Lindsay

We find no Minor Note in that "magical figure", Vachel Lindsay, who speaks of God in an original language, set with gusto to tunes that no one else could have imagined. On the other hand, we have found quotations from him illustrating the idea of God in every one of the aspects of our general headings, except as Will, and we are inclined to conclude that there would be an instance of that if we could only discover it. Perhaps his Campbellite doctrines may have emphasized human free-will-- it would be interesting to investigate.

In his Preface to his Collected Poems he speaks of his family as "Campbellites" and points out their difference from the Methodists. "Your precise, pedantic, frigidly logical (2) Campbellite-scholars were the dearest foes of the wild Methodists. The 'Campbellites' were the enemies of all the religious ecstasies of their time, and I still resent being called a Methodist-- There was always a cold second thought, a double consciousness among the 'Campbellite' theologians. They breathed fire, but they thought in granite."

(1) Collected Poems, General William Booth Enters Heaven, p. 123.  
See also Ibid., pp. 180: 176: 189

(2) Ibid., p. 11

C

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Evidently the theology that he inherited has proved hard-headed enough to have saved him any note of doubt or misgiving. This inherited theology would probably account also for the distinctly doctrinal note in his poetry, doctrine, however, so liberally interpreted as to produce sometimes curiously unusual combinations, as, for instance, when the little dancer "finds the true God-head". Doubtless, the two miracle plays,  
 (1)  
 "apocalyptic in color", written and staged by his mother, and participated in by himself when very young, played their part also in his rompingly liberal theological bias.  
 (2)

On one of his wandering "Gospel of Beauty" trips he found himself lonely on St. Valentine's day and wrote,

"This is the price I pay  
 For the foolish search for the shrine;  
 ---  
 This is the price I pay  
 For the throb of the mystic wings  
 When the dove of God comes down  
 And beats round my heart and sings:"  
 (3)

Yes, Vachel Lindsay finds a song in every sad aspect of life. He seems never to be troubled with doubts, and we have not found in him the Minor Note.

---

(1) Lindsay, Collected Poems, How a Little Girl Danced, p. 64.

(2) Ibid. The Gospel of Beauty, (II) Illinois Village, p. 73;  
On Reading Omar Khayyam, p. 537.

(3) Ibid. The Beggar's Valentine, p. 797

(e)

(e)

(2) Kilmer

"We have found one other "bounding boy" filled with faith in God, and that is Joyce Kilmer. With a decided flair for life, he was a peculiar blend of piety and mirth. When he joined the Catholic Church in 1913, being then twenty-seven years old, he said, "I like to think that I have always been a Catholic". The (1) idea of God slips from his pen with as much surety as does any idea of the material world that he may have. It is almost an off-hand mention of Him that he often makes, but always he makes it with confidence, and with the authority of the Church behind him. It would be idle to ascribe to him any Minor Note because of this one reference that might have fatalistic implications:

He finds in the side show of the circus a giant, a dwarf, and one of "figured skin". He writes

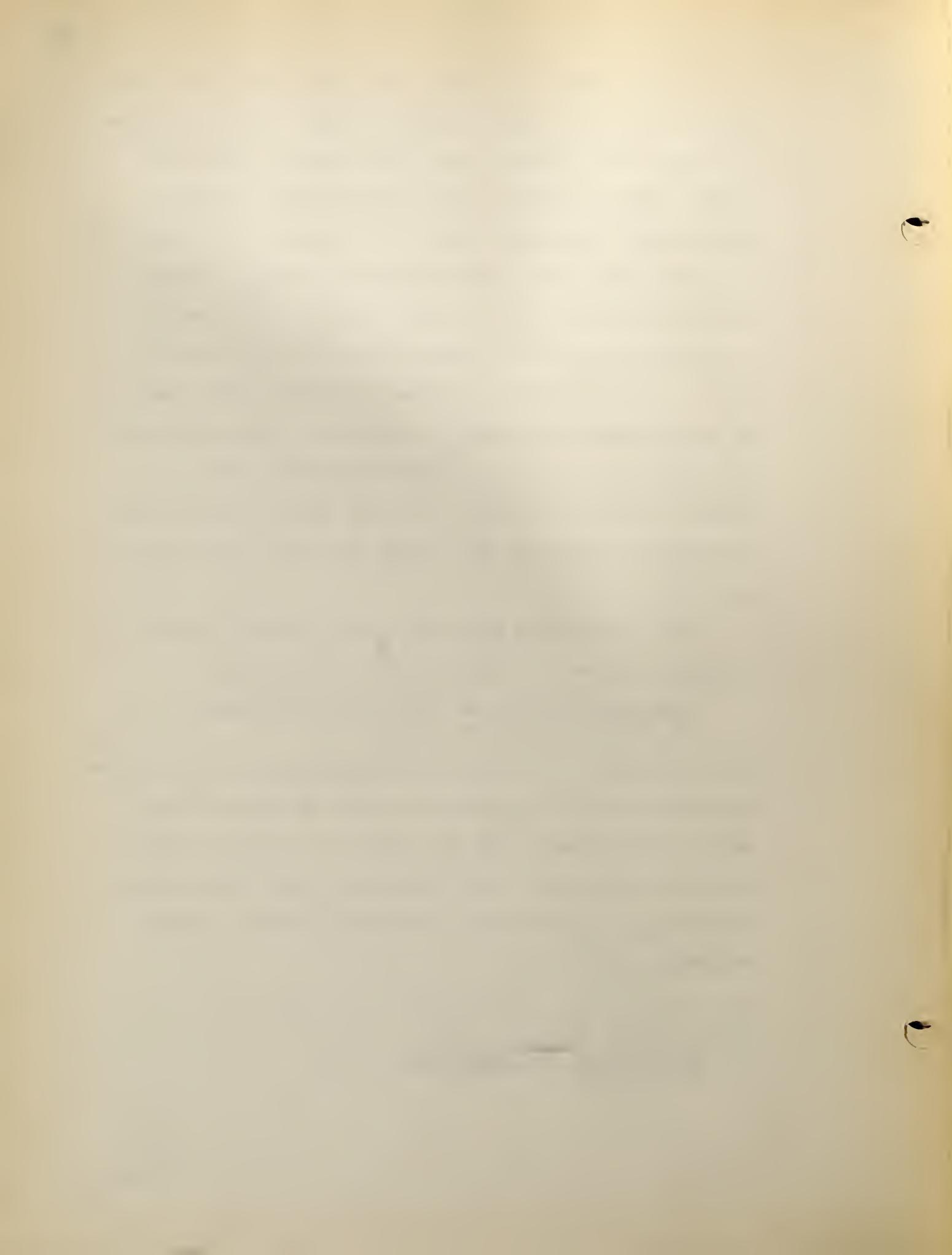
"And each is scarred and seared and marred  
By Fate's relentless hand."

(2)

It is a capital "F", and yet it seems more reasonable to take this line as an evidence of his off-handishness; and to think that it had its roots in sympathy rather than in skepticism. His quotations have fallen into every class except those of Will and Truth - the most abstract ones.

(1) Holliday- Memoir, p. 51.

(2) Main Street, The Big Top, p. 58.



b. Three  
Poets in  
Whom Some  
Find the  
Minor Note

We will now turn our attention to three others in whom we do not find the Minor Note, but to whom it is sometimes ascribed: Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, and Edgar Lee Masters.

Clement Wood, whose evidence one would be inclined to discount because his criticisms are so often destructive, says of Mr. Robinson, "— his faith cannot reach the sunlight.

From the poet whose life is dungeons----  
we need not look for wings to split the sky--  
His wings are broken on the bars; the black  
despair of his heartsong is magnificence enough".

(1)  
Amy Lowell takes exceptions to this attitude saying that it "is to mistake his attitude and the subtlety of his thought. Doom there may be, but it is an adjunct, not a pre-occupation. He doubts himself into cynicism, and rises from it through the conception of unexplained beauty".

(2)

My findings from Mr. Robinson as to what he has to say about God would not agree with either of these two critics. As far as the idea of God is concerned, I find that he speaks with the conviction of one who has summoned all sides of his nature and has discovered God everywhere. He has presented God in every one of the larger divisions of the idea, and, moreover, we have discovered no Minor Note that he has voiced in regard to Him.

(1) Poets of America, p. 141.  
(2) Poetry and Poets, p. 228.

(C)

(C)

To be sure, he pictures Napoleon on Saint Helena as saying,

"An island, I have said:  
 A peak, where fiery dreams and far desires  
 Are rained on, like old fires:  
 A vermin region by the stars abhorred  
 Where falls the flaming word  
 By which I consecrate with unsuccess  
 An acreage of God's forgetfulness".

(1)

But, . to picture one who has separated himself from God as feeling that separation is not to voice skepticism. On the other hand, the very sense of separation betrays a consciousness of God. Mr. Robinson's A Christmas Sonnet. For One in Doubt is his sure answer to a charge of skepticism:

"While you that in your sorrow disavow  
 Service and hope, see love and brotherhood  
 Far off as ever, it will do no good  
 For you to wear his thorns upon your brow  
 For doubt of him---  
 Though other saviors have in other lore  
 A Legend, and for other gods have died-  
 Though death may wear the crown it always wore  
 And ignorance be still the sword of pride-  
 Something is here that was not here before,  
 And strangely has not yet been crucified".

(a) Unity of the World

Moreover, in Mr. Robinson's poetry alone have we discovered a quotation carrying the idea of the unity of the world; the unity of that Spirit that evidences itself in the physical world, in man's spirit, in fact. everywhere. And in that quotation he presents that spirit-unity as God:

(3)

(1) Collected Poems, p. 324.

(2) Ibid., p. 903.

(3) Ibid., Sonnet, n. 96

(C)

(C)

"why do we shun to know  
 That in love's elemental over-glow  
 God's wholeness gleams with light superlative?  
 Oh, brother men, if you have eyes at all,  
 Look at a branch, a bird, a child, a rose,  
 Or anything God ever made that grows,-  
 Nor let the smallest vision of it slip,  
 Till you may read, as on Belshazzar's wall,  
 The glory of the eternal partnership".

(b) He has  
Not the  
Minor Note

To summarize, in Mr. Robinson's poetry we have discovered a complete, thoroughly worked out, and highly developed intellectual belief in God as a Spirit force, in and through and throughout the world and manifesting itself as superiority in many different ways, and at the same time possessing unity. This is to say with emphasis that in his poetry we do not find the Minor Note.

(2) Robert  
Frost

Clement Wood has also seen Robert Frost as always depicting failure "not as a decree, but as a confession".  
<sup>(1)</sup>  
 But here I do not think that Mr. Wood has read the meaning behind Mr. Frost's poetic realism. Mr. Untermeyer quotes Mr. Frost as saying, "'There are -- two types of realists-- the one who offers a good deal of dirt with his potato to show that it is a real one: and the one who is satisfied with the potato brushed clean. To me, the thing that art does for life is to clean it.'" And we have found that  
<sup>(2)</sup>  
 he has presented life in that manner.

---

(1) Poets of America, p. 162

(2) Modern American Poetry, p. 217.

6

6

Mr. Frost's observation is of a penetrating, brooding nature, and so, when he depicts a failure it is not the failure alone that he is showing. We might take as an example his Mending Wall. In this poem Mr. Wood sees "a portrait from life of the bewildered poet looking on the ancient relic that was once thriving life". Yes, it is surely that, but it is more, too, for it makes the reader feel that useless walls are undesirable. It is this mystic other-worldliness about Robert Frost that keeps this Minor Note from having weight. No, we do not find him a pessimist showing up failures, but rather a swinger of birches, as he said he would like to be.

"I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,  
And climb black birches up a snow-white trunk,  
Toward heaven."  
(2)

It is only fair to admit in this connection that the only section in which we did not have a quotation from him showing the idea of God was that of Goodness and God.

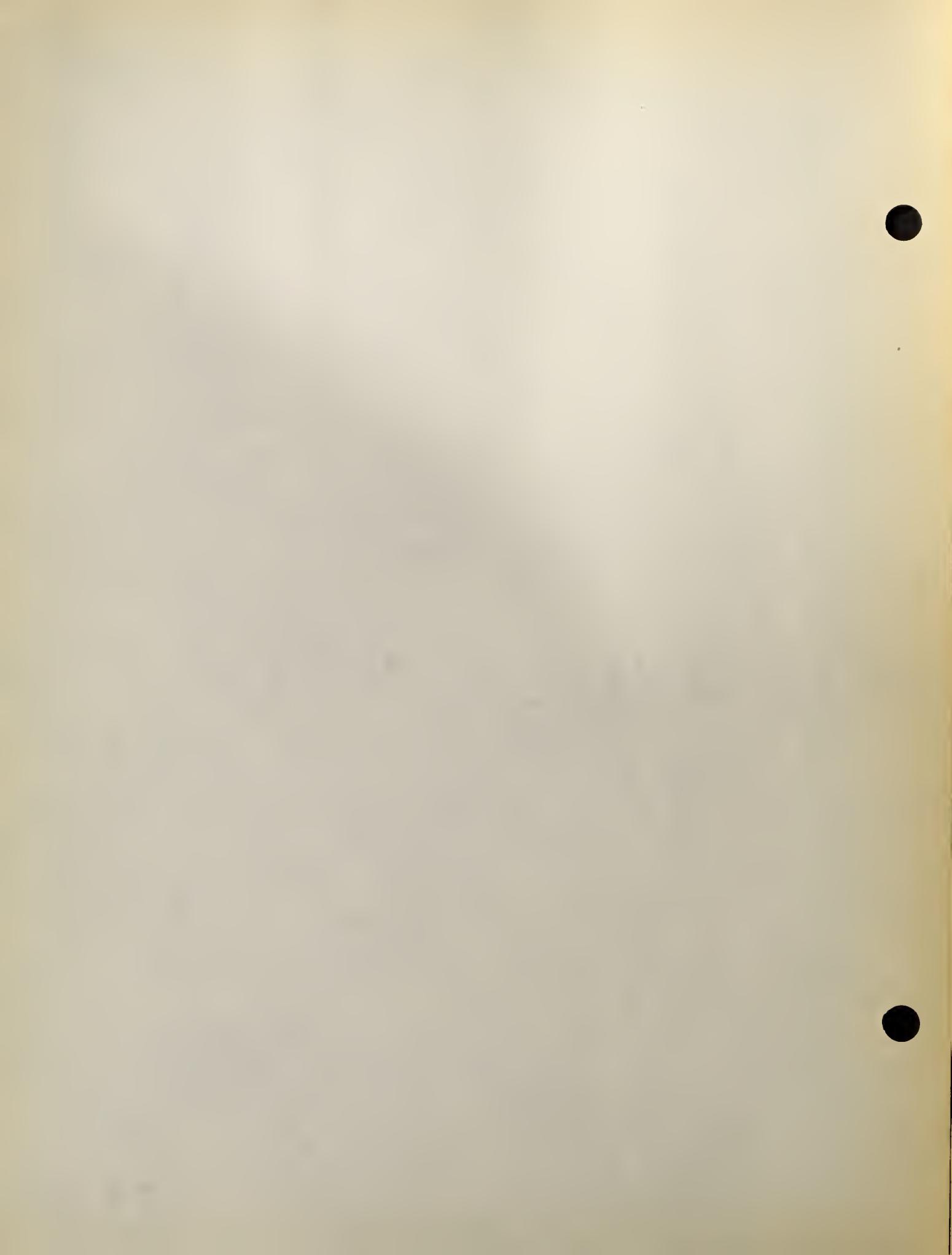
(3) Edgar Lee Masters

We have found the Minor Note in Mr. Master's work, only in the dramatic sketches spoken by those whose bodies lie in the Spoon River graveyard. So many sordid stories are told that his work shows considerable pessimism. One of the Spoon River

---

(1) Poets of America, p. 150.

(2) Mountain Interval, Birches, p. 39.



stories is told by Wendell P. Boyd who says,

"the reason I believe God crucified His  
Own Son  
To get out of the wretched tangle is,  
because it sounds just like Him."  
(1)

The similar strain is shown in E.C. Culbertson,

"For it is a law of the Kingdom of Heaven  
That whoso enters the vineyard at the eleventh hour  
Shall receive a full day's pay.  
And it is a law of the Kingdom of this World  
That those who first oppose a good work  
Seize it and make it their own".  
(2)

This does not sound like the writing of a man who believes in a good God, but it must be remembered that Mr. Masters makes his characters tell their stories straight from the shoulder. He cuts his lines hard.. He looks the case squarely in the face, and analyzes the situation like the lawyer that he is. Moreover, he shows on the other side people who believe in God; for example, the story of Elmer Karr,

"What but the love of God could have softened  
And made forgiving the people of Spoon River  
----  
When I returned from fourteen years in prison!"  
(3)

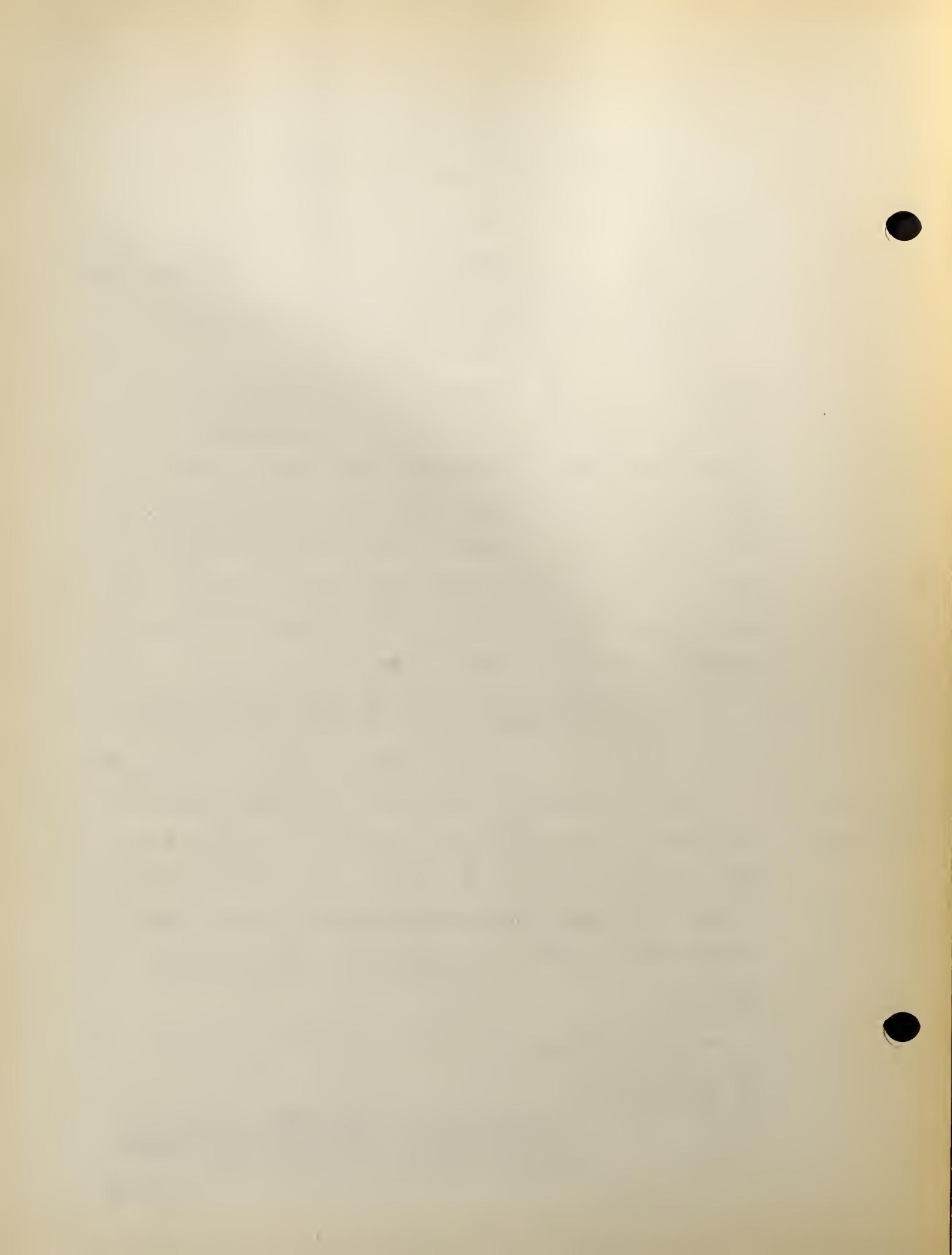
(a) Little  
of the  
Minor Note

And so, it does not seem as if the Minor Note is considerable in Mr. Masters, especially in view of the fact that we have found references to God in considerable variety and quantity. It is interesting to note that we found only one quotation under the division Goodness and God.

(1) Spoon River, p. 71.

(2) Ibid., p. 161.

(3) Spoon River, p. 173; See also Anne Rutledge, p. 194;  
The Great Valley, Captain John Whistler;  
Songs and Satires, William Reidy, p. 84.



c. One in whom the Minor Note is Considerable

Because of the fact that the poetry of T.S. Eliot is so very different in its make-up from poetry in general, it

would seem best to dispose of it in a separate section.

It might be said that his way of writing is a sort of extreme position of the imagist point of view. He uses the word not only for the image that it presents, but also for the symbolic significance of that image. This symbolism of the words tells the story to the reader, almost irrespective of their thought content-- or rather it is supposed to do so, and the result is inevitably that "no two critics agree".

(1)

To arrive here is only to arrive where we started in the introduction, but nevertheless we have traversed a circle to get here, having now read all of his poems that we have been able to procure. It would indeed be astonishing if critics could agree

(2)

on this poetry! But it is because I find one point at which they do agree, and at which I can agree with them, and because at this point I see a bearing on the idea of God that he presents, that I am able to keep a study of his poetry within the province of this thesis. All agree that here we have

"chaotic conditions", "agonies", and "disillusionment".

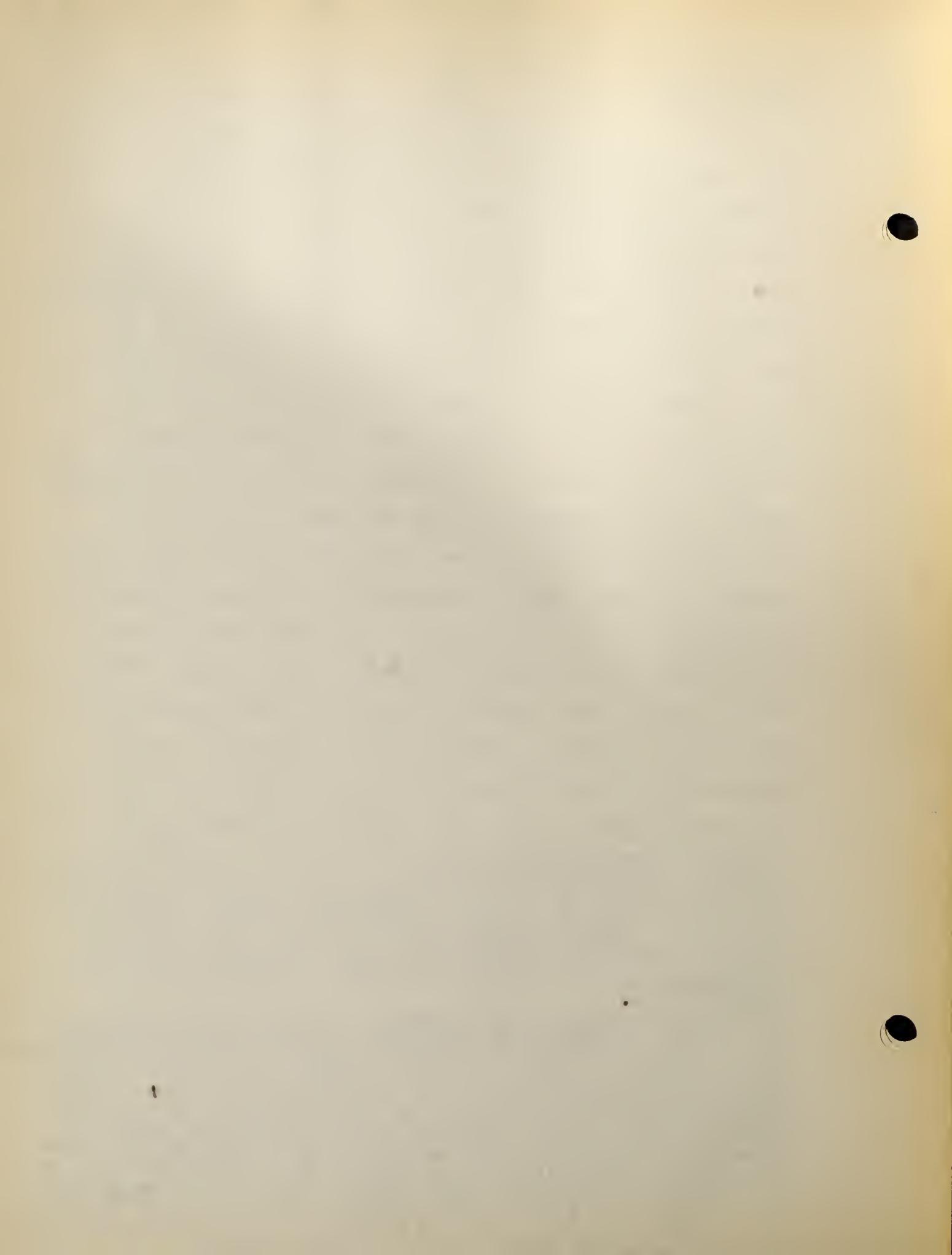
(3)

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(1) See p. 6 (2) of this thesis.

(2) We have used six libraries in this search: Boston University, the Public Libraries of Lowell, Somerville, Belmont, Cambridge and Boston. The book, Poems 1909-1925, is a slender volume volume of 99 pages-little on a page. The name would seem to indicate that it is a complete collection. Kreymborg speaks of The Waste Land as "virtually the last of Eliot's poems". Our S-S. p 538.

(3) Kreymborg, Our Singing Strength, p. 536. He says also: "The detractors considered the thin; (Waste Land) an outrageous hoax, and even some of the devotees feared that the master was spoofing the enemy, and tempered their comments accordingly. Nearly everyone waited for somebody else to say the first word, secretly dreading the prospect of making an ass of himself.--a man not a classic tradition wrote 'The Waste Land'. This man, intimately conscious of chaotic conditions, suffering the agonies of a race smitten with disillusionment, is enough of an artist-scientist to set things down in apparent detachment. He is one of the patients in the world hospital". p. 536. In this connection I would add that perhaps his poetry might be read by a psychiatrist versed in neurology more profitably than by a literary critic.



However you may read Mr. Eliot's meaning, or fail to read it, or mis-read it, you cannot fail to sense a general feeling of frustration. So much we all get from it.

And so it is because the whole content of his poetry seems to be one dead weight of these different strains of pessimism, materialism, skepticism, and fatalism, that we consider him here separately.

It has been noticed from our tabulation of quotations containing the idea of God that no quotation from Mr. Eliot has been listed. This is because all of the references to God that we have found in his poetry have shown the opposite of our regular categories. In The Waste Land, (III) The Fire Sermon, we find God presented thus,

(1)

"On Margate Sands  
I can connect  
nothing with nothing.  
---

O Lord thou pluckest me out  
O Lord thou pluckes me out  
burning."

This might be taken as the opposite of God as Love. And this also,

"And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat  
and snicker".  
(2)

The following three quotations might be taken as showing the opposite of God as Creator, perhaps under the sub-heading of Ruler;

"The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours.  
Think at last  
We have not reached conclusion, when I  
Stiffen in a rented house  
---

White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims  
And an old man driven by the Trades  
To a sleepy corner."  
(3)

(1) Poems p. 79.

(2) The Le Gallienne Book, p. 351, The Love Song of J. Al red Prufrock.

(3) Aiken, Modern American Poets, Gerontion, p. 229



This seems to indicate fate ruling rather than God.

In The Hippopotamus he scores the Church. The following seems to mock God;

"I saw the 'potamus take wing  
Ascending from the damp savannas,  
And quiring angels round him sing  
The praise of God, in loud hosannas."  
(1)

The following would indicate His impotence,

"Lips that would kiss  
Form prayers to broken stone."  
(2)

(1) Eliot Only The Minor Note It would seem, then, that in Mr. Eliot's poetry there is rebellion against the idea of God rather than anything of it. We would say that his poetry contains only the Minor Note.

How seriously the above fact is to be taken is an open question. It is worthy of note that in Mr. Eliot's prose he defends not only religion but also Christianity. In The Humanism of Irving Babbitt, published in 1928, he says, "the Christian religion is an essential part of the history of our race". Moreover, he is zealous for religion; he is sure that humanism cannot take its place. He defends the theistic idea of God, saying "What is the higher will to will, if there is nothing either 'interior, exterior, or superior' to the individual?" "It should lead, I think, to the conclusion that the humanistic point of view is auxiliary to and dependent upon the religious point of view".  
(4)

---

(1) Untermeyer, American Poetry Since 1900, p. 353.

(2) Aiken, Modern American Poets, p. 303, The Hollow Men.

(3) For Lancelot Andrews, p. 144.

(4) Ibid., p. 149.



Perhaps between the publication of The Waste Land in 1922 and that of For Lancelot Andrewes in 1928 something religiously significant happened to him. In that latter book he announced himself as Anglo-Catholic in religion. As far as his idea of God is concerned it is a complete change of standpoint. This is the conclusion, if, indeed, his poetry is to be considered seriously.

(1)

d. The Remaining Six Poets We have then, six poets left in whom we

will consider the Minor Note - all five

of the women and one of the men, Carl Sandburg. For the sake of brevity we have arranged the material under the strains to be considered, instead of taking up each poet separately.

(1) Paganism We have not discovered in the Minor Note the strain of paganism in any of these poets except H.D. She presents a pagan idea of God not only as if she were reproducing the ancient Greek, but also in a way that seems to indicate that it expresses her own life.

(2)

She gives no other idea of God than this pagan one.

Paganism  
Consistent  
in H.D.

Now, of course, we all know that H.D. is not an ancient Greek although she "cuts her marble frieze" in Greek fashion. She is an American was born in Philadelphia, attended college at Bryn Mawr, lived in the United States until she went abroad in 1911, when she was about twenty-five years old. She is still in middle-age and has, therefore, yet to show whether she will be

(1) Muir, on Eliot, The Nation, Vol. 121, p. 163: "His influence as a poet has not been in the same direction as his influence as a critic.-- Mr. Eliot's poetry--lacks immediacy and importance. It expresses an attitude of life, not a principle of life.-- He is bitter, melancholy, despairing, but he is not serious." See also, Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry, p. 557: "Broadly summarized, however, about half of the sixty-three pages of Eliot's Poems attains a level little higher than that of acrid epigrams, mordant and complicated vers de societe."

(2) Le Gallienne, Priapus, p. 343; Heliodora, Hermonax, p. 87; After Troy, p. 49. Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry, p. 481.

6

content always to write as a Greek. So far she has spoken consistently only of the gods.

(2) Materialism      While there is quite a little materialism Not Important.      in this poetry and while it is often associated with death, still we have discovered no point at which it touches directly the idea of God. We would, therefore, say that it is not important in the Minor Note.

(3) Skepticism      These five poets have shown some skept- Not Strong.      icism in their poetry; Sara Teasdale, Amy Lowell, Carl Sandburg, Edna Lillay, and Elinor Wylie. But probably it is not systematic enough or assertive enough to be called anything but "doubting", in the case of any one of them. And so, in connection with the idea of God, there is not a steady, out and out skeptic among them. Probably Elinor Wylie comes the nearest to it, but even she says,

"Take home thy prodigal child, O Lord of Hosts!"

With Sara Teasdale, always moody, introspective, and often sad, doubting is easier than believing. Just as her pain seems part of her joy, so her doubts seem present while she believes. In the poem, In the Hood she sings a little song of joy, and then,

"Suddenly a heavy snake  
Reared black upon a stone."  
(1)

And so, always she seems to see both sides at once. And accordingly it is no wonder that sometimes she does not

(1) Dark of the Moon, p. 72.



believe in God. But, in spite of her doubts, she seems to hold herself steadfastly to belief, as the number and variety of references to Him in the tabulation have shown. She may say, as she does when she looks into the pool of water and sees the reflection of the colonnade almost blotted out by fallen leaves,

"There is no god to care."  
(1)

Yet she also says,

"I am ashamed, I have betrayed my Friend."  
(2)

And she commits herself to a diligent search of Him here,

"If I can find God, then I shall find Him,  
If none can find Him, then I shall sleep soundly."  
(3)

And so, I think we can fairly say that in the poetry of Sara Teasdale we find skepticism in the Minor Note of little weight, because to her faith seems more important than doubt.

Edna Millay's poetry shows also much gloomy introspection. She, too, is troubled with doubts. In Nuit Blanche she says that at night when she cannot sleep,

"---doubts come tittering up to me  
That should by day be still."  
(4)

But with her the skepticism of the Minor Note is even less positive than it is with Sara Teasdale. She has also presented the idea of God much less frequently. Most of the quotations which we have heretofore noted have been from the early poem Renaissance. The other quotations under Beauty extol Beauty rather than God, and the few other utterances concerning Him

(1) Ibid., Autumn, p. 25.

(2) Ibid., Midsummer Night, p. 54.

(3) Love Songs, The Lamp, p. 84.

(4) Harp Weaver, p. 15.



were with little assurance. In fact she has said in her later volumes almost nothing about Him. But neither has she voiced skepticism strongly. In Interim she says,

"would to God

I too might feel that frenzied faith whose touch  
Makes temporal the most enduring grief."

(1)

This is in the early volume Renascence, and it might imply that she feels the lack of faith. In the poem, Renascense, she voices the importance of faith thus,

"Not Truth, but Faith, it is  
That keeps the world alive."

(2)

If she expressed herself as feeling the value of faith in this early volume, she has also made in it positive mention of Him. In her later volumes she has made scant reference to Him, and she also expressed in no place that we have discovered a positive doubt concerning Him.

As with Amy Lowell and with Carl Sandburg skepticism  
(3) (4)  
seems part of their general dissatisfaction with the world we will treat it under the division of pessimism in the Minor Note, and likewise Elinor Wylie's under fatalism.

(4) Pessimism in the Minor Note. Much pessimism is found in the work of all of these poets except H.D. (A certain lack of concern for humanity would lead us not to expect any on her part.) This pessimism is sometimes a general dissatisfaction with the world, as shown by Amy Lowell here,

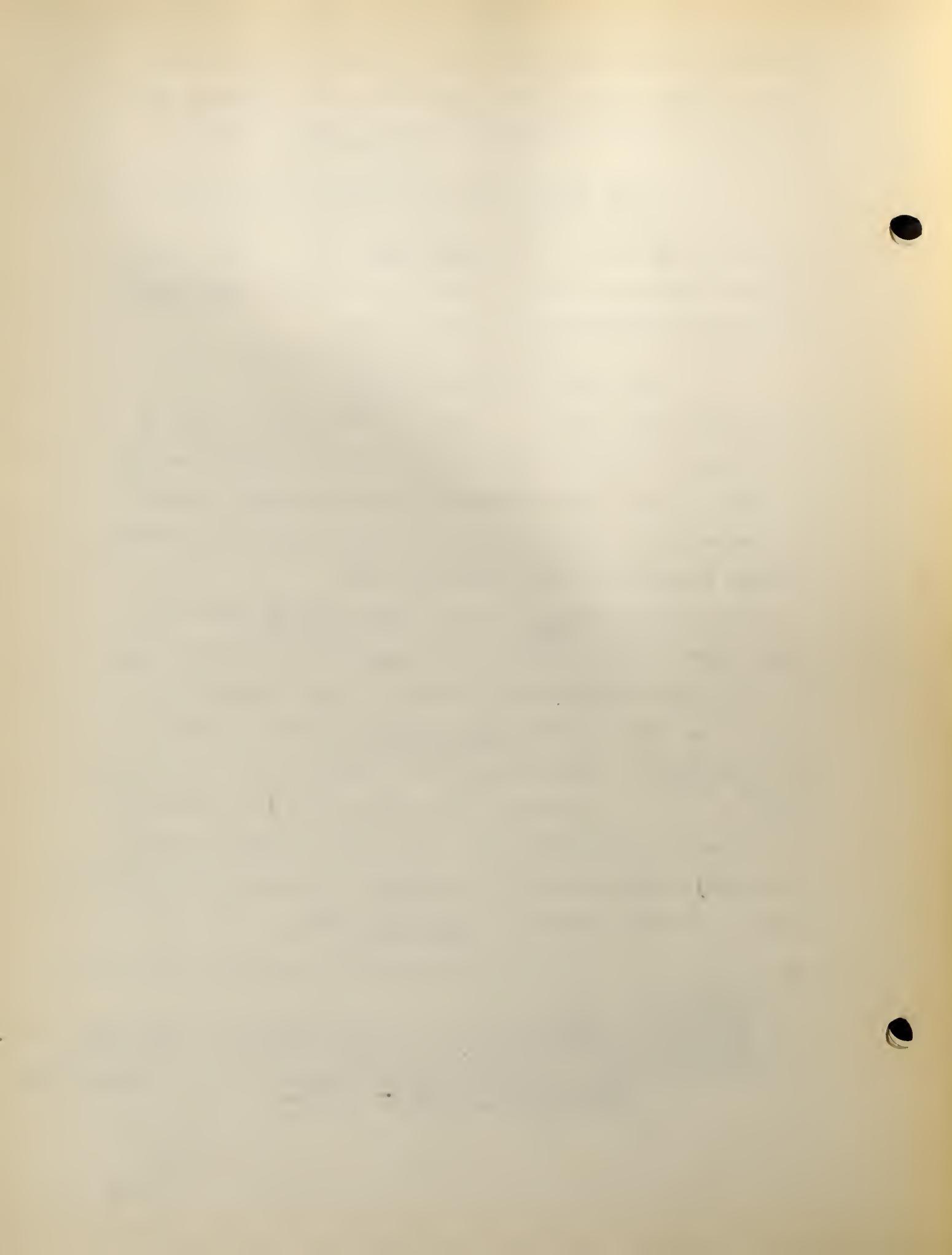
(1) Renascence, p. 27

(2) Renascence, Rennascence.

(3) Sword Blades and Poppy Seed, The Last Quarter of the Moon, p. 68.

(4) Smoke and Steel, Hoodlums, p. 108.

(3) See also What's O'Clock, Fool O' The Moon, p. 156; Sword Blades After Hearing a Waltz; p. 155.



"I who am shut up with broken crockery  
In a dark closet."  
(1)

And when pessimism touches the idea of God and so comes into our Minor Note, it is still greatly in evidence.

With Sara Teasdale it is again a matter of moods. In war time she says,

"No one would mind, neither bird nor tree  
If mankind perished utterly."  
(2)

Whenever she comes in contact with human misery, her heart goes out and she herself suffers. But this misery does not always separate her from God, but rather it often leads her to Him. She says in Spirit's House,

"From naked stones of agony  
I will build a house for me.  
----

I have not gone my way in vain  
For I have good of all my pain;  
My spirit's quiet house will be  
Built of naked stones I trod  
On roads where I lost sight of God."  
(3)

Even through the "tragic farce" of life she finds God;

"When I have said, 'This tragic farce I play in  
Has neither dignity, delight nor end,'  
The holy night draws all the stars around me,  
I am ashamed, I have betrayed my Friend."  
(4)

Although Edna Millay's poetry carries also a heavy weight of pessimism, we have discovered no point at which it has been associated with God, either in opposition or in accord. But the Sonnet, To Jesus on His Birthday, from her latest volume, would seem to indicate that she believes in the power of Jesus

(1) Sword Blades and Poppy Seed, Misery II

See also Untermeyer, Modern American Poetry, Free Fantasia, p. 205.  
Legends, Before the Storm, p. 238.

What's O'Clock, Purple Grackles, p. 81.

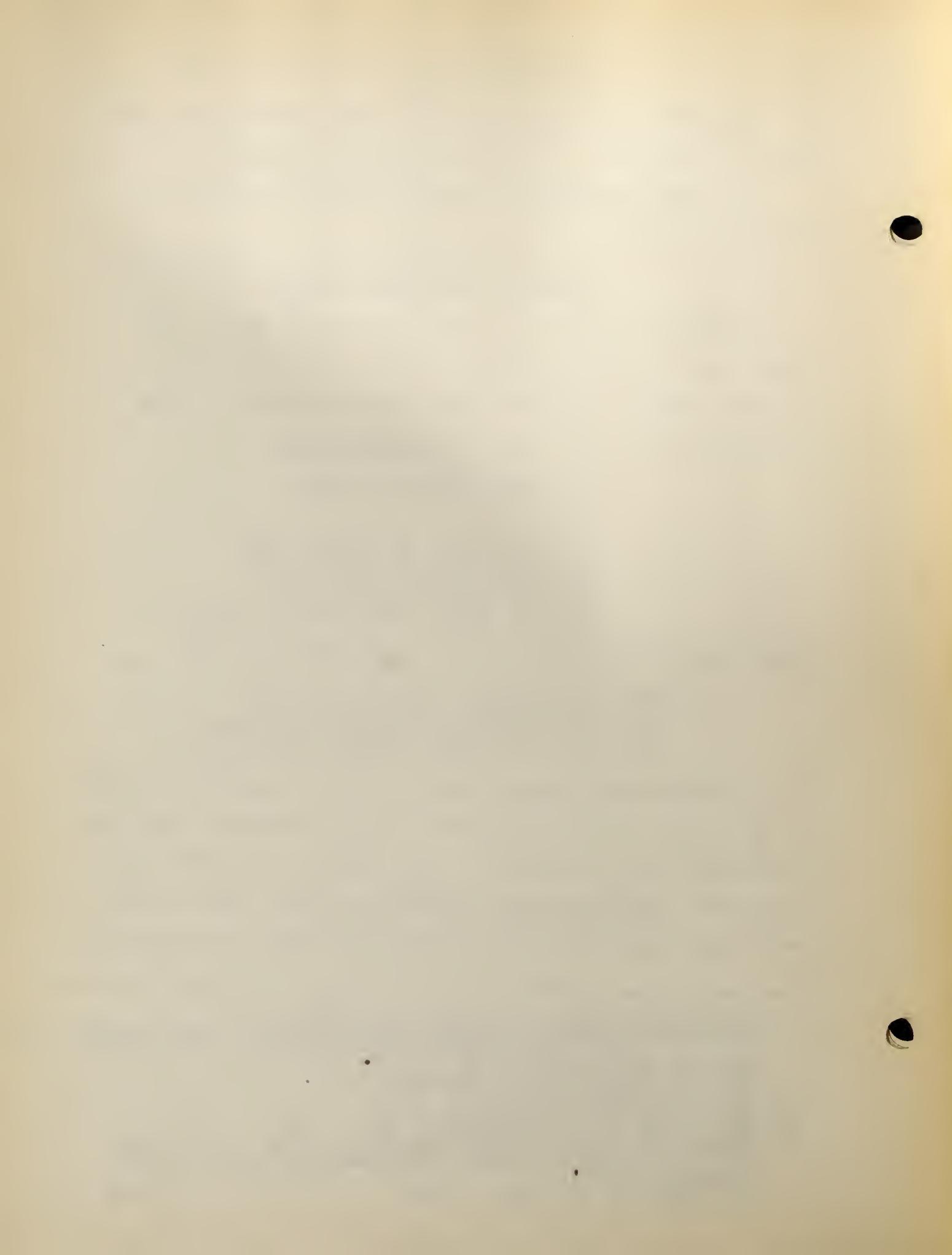
(2) Flame and Shadow, War Sins, p. 89.

(3) Love Songs, Spirit's House, p. 47.

(4) Dark of the Moon, Midsummer Night, p. 54.

See also Flame and Shadow, The Broken Field, p. 47; The Sanctuary, p. 118.

And Rivers to the Sea, p. 118.



to help the world, if humanity did not stand in the way. Because Christ in this sense might be taken as an aspect of God, we quote it here:

"For this your mother sweated in the cold,  
 For this you bled upon the bitter tree;  
 A yard of tinsel ribbon bought and sold;  
 A paper wreath; a day at home for me.  
 The merry bells ring out, the people kneel;  
 Up goes the man of God before the crowd;  
 With voice of honey and with eyes of steel  
 He drones your humble gospel to the proud.  
 Nobody listens. Less than the wind that blows  
 Are all your words to us you died to save.  
 O Prince of Peace! O Sharon's dewy Rose!  
 How mute you lie within your vaulted grave,  
 The stone the angel rolled away with tears  
 Is back upon your mouth these thousand years."

(1)

In this case her pessimism has added to rather than detracted from what she has said about God, and, as we have discovered no instance where it has detracted, we would say that in Edna Millay her pessimism has made a little contribution to what she has said about God.

With Elinor Wylie, on the other hand, there does not seem to be any way out. The following quotation is characteristic. She hears the church bells ring, and the sound makes her glad--and then, as always with her, the final note is one of despair,

"Lift up your hearts!  
 The sound was loud and sweet.  
 Slow and slow the great bell swung,  
 It hung in the steeple mute;  
 And people tore its living tongue  
 Out by the very root."

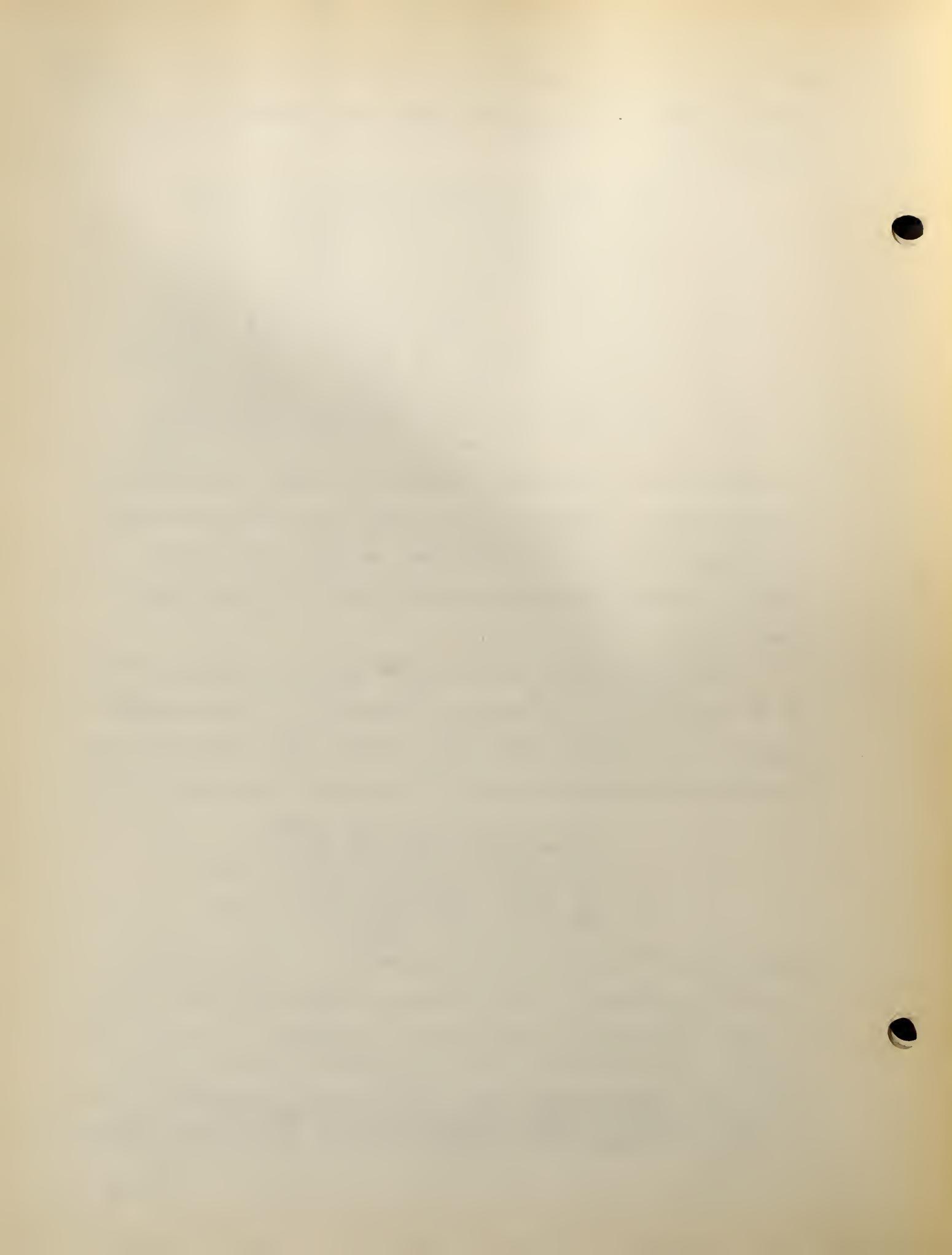
(2)

Even the bell of His church seems to have a "living tongue" but the willfulness of the people--and their stupidity--seem to keep Him from operating. And so, through it all, her

(1) Millay, Buck in the Snow, To Jesus on His Birthday, p. 66.

(2) Wylie, Nets to Catch the Wind, The Church Bell, p. 17.

See also Angels and Earthly Creatures, Fair Annet's Song, p. 41.



pessimism leads her to tell us not more of God but only more of the futility of life.

With Carl Sandburg the pessimism of the Minor Note has an out-spoken blustering about it that saves it from a like note of despair. In Manufactured Gods he says,

"They put up big wooden gods,  
Then they burned the big wooden gods  
And put up brass gods and  
Changing their mind suddenly  
Knocked down the brass gods and put up  
A dough face god with gold ear rings,  
They didn't know a little tin god  
Is as good as anything in the line of gods  
One kind brings luck and answers prayers  
As well as another."

(1)

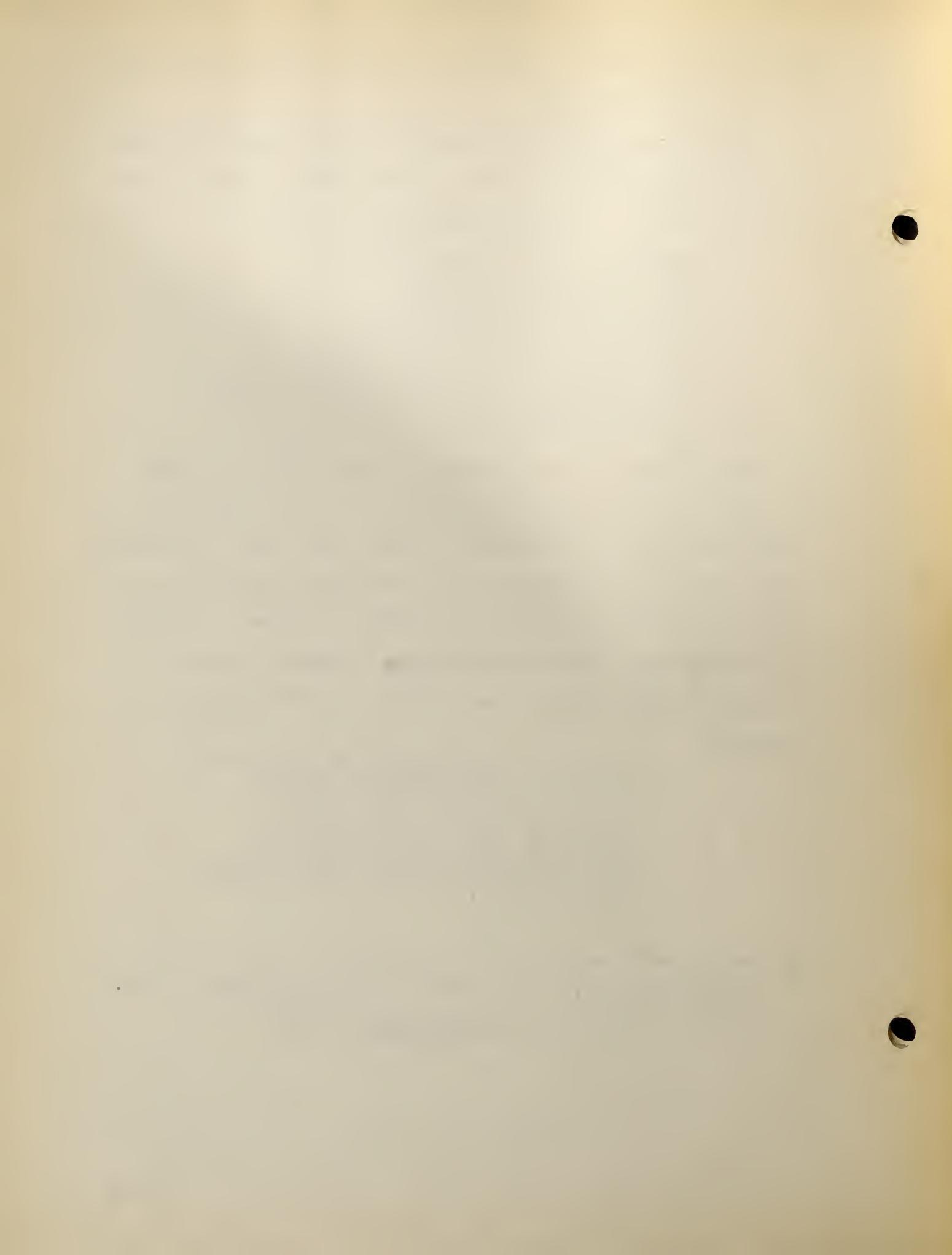
This way of making fun of people for their foolish little tin gods does not in any way detract from God's power but rather enhances it. He feels the heavy load upon the workers, and he seems to get a good deal of comfort in railing at the institutions that make such conditions possible. Sometimes his indignation reaches sarcasm--how strangely men have interpreted God's love! The following is from Streets Too Old,

---"statues of the kings on all corners  
bronzes of kings--ancient bearded  
kings who wrote books and spoke of  
God's love for all people--and  
young kings who took forth armies  
across the frontiers splitting the  
heads of their opponents and enlarging  
their kingdoms."

(2)

(1) Smoke and Steel, p. 70. See also Crap Shooters, p. 34.

(2) Ibid., p. 193; See also Pick-offs, p. 69.



And so we say that Carl Sandburg's pessimism does not lead him away from God. His intense love for men and his confidence in them, keeps his pessimism from becoming disintegrating, and so there is a tendency toward God rather than away from Him.

In Amy Lowell's poetry pessimism is a vital part. If she says anything at all, perhaps it is that the world is all wrong.  
(1)  
When this pessimism connects with the idea of God she often uses an exclamation that is much like an oath. In Patterns she rebels against the "pattern" of war and says,

"Christ! What are patterns for?"  
(2)

Sometimes it is more like a cry of distress than like an oath as in this case,

"No word, no word, O Lord God!"  
(3)

Sometimes it seems a mere casual mention of Him, as here,

"Thank God for that."  
(4)

In none of these instances has her pessimism made a contribution to her idea of God, but they have shown that her rebellion is not only against the world, but also against God.

Sometimes her pessimism leads her to express rebellion against the institutions of society, and the church comes in for its share. In the Precinct - Rochester she scores the church--itself respectable and comfortable--for its heedlessness of the poor.  
(5)

(1) See p. 49, note (1) of this thesis.

(2) Untermyer, Modern American Poetry, p. 237.

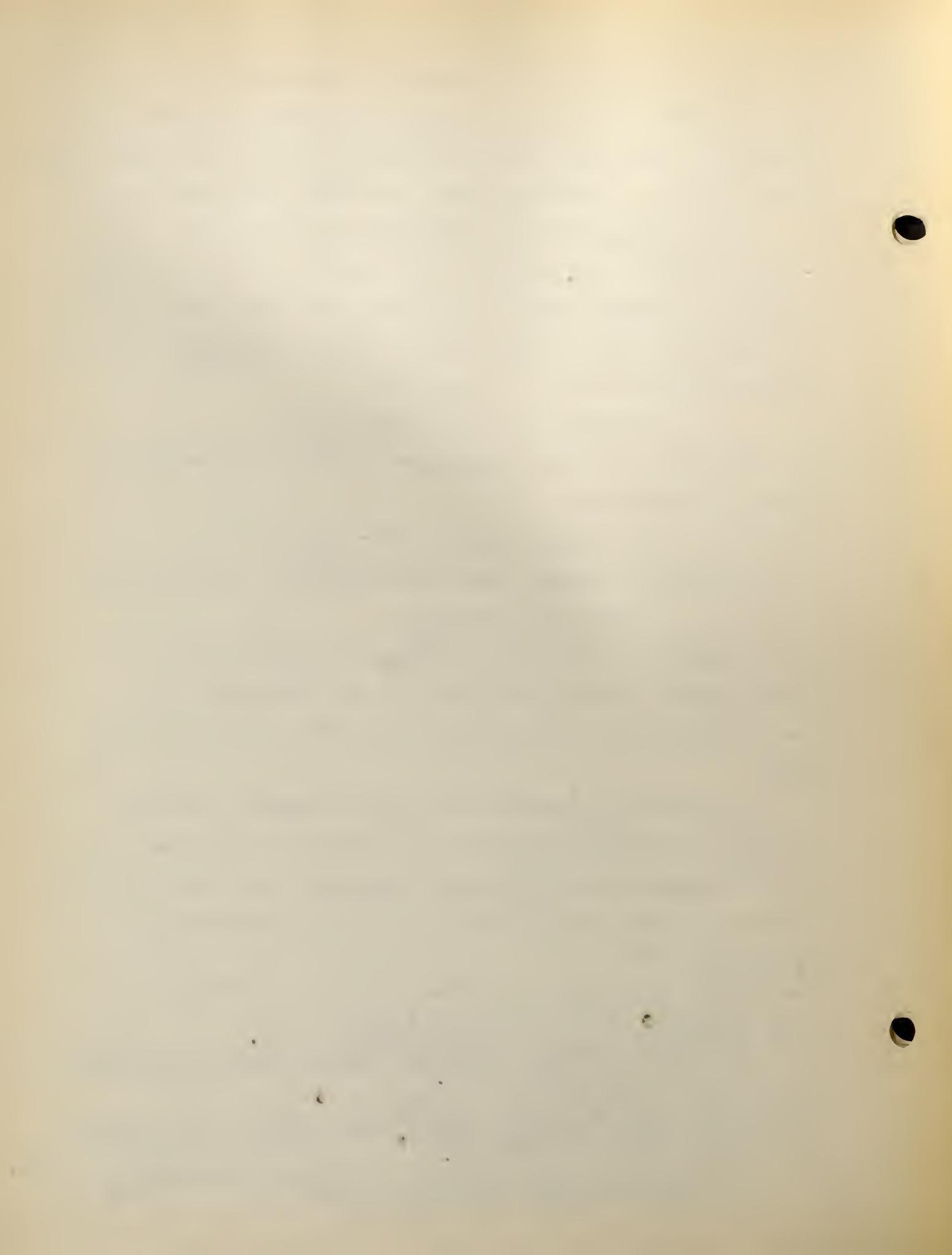
See also Men, Women and Ghosts, Number Three on the Docket, p. 207. And Ibid., Reaping, n. 259.

(3) What's O'Clock, Fool O'the Moon, p. 156.

(4) Men, Women and Ghosts, The Cremona Violin, p. 57.

(5) Sword Blades and Poppy Seed, p. 34, See also Ely Cathedral, Note p. 30 of this thesis.

And Men, Women and Ghosts, The Red Lacquer Music Stand, p. 322. And What's O'Clock, The Swans, p. 24.



And then again her gloom sometimes leads her to question whether there is a God or not, as in the following;

"An atom tossed in a chaos made  
Of yeastng worlds, which bubble and foam.  
Whence have I come?  
What would be home?  
I hear no answer. I am afraid!"

"I crave to be lost like a wind-blown flame,  
Pushed into nothingness by a breath,  
And quench in a wrath  
Of engulfing death  
This fight for God or the devil's game."

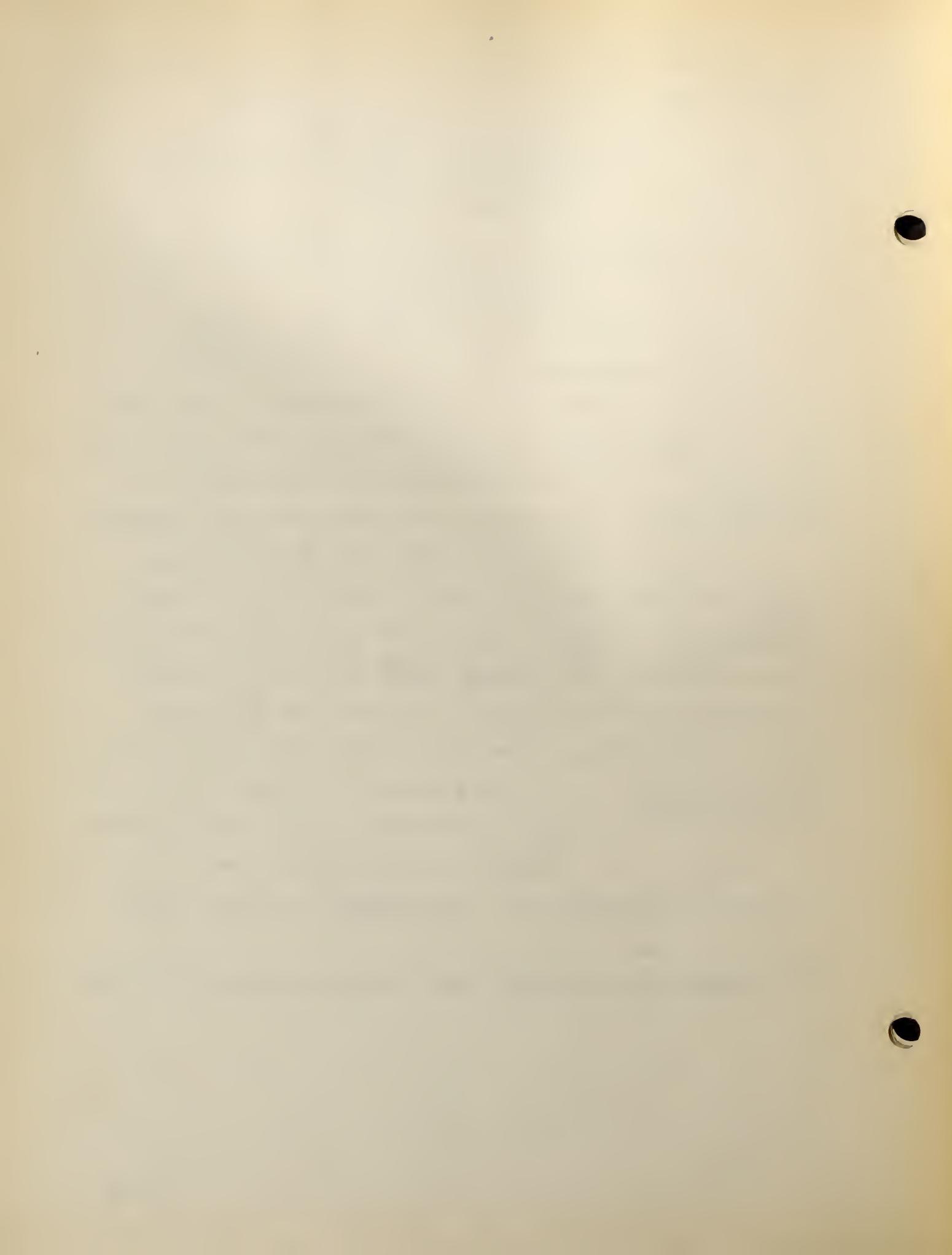
(1)

And so in Amy Lowell pessimism has added nothing to what she has said about God. On the other hand it has shown her in rebellion against not only the church, but against God.

Pessimism Important in The Minor Note In the consideration of pessimism in the Minor Note we have found that Carl Sandburg has said a little more about God; Edna Millay has seen Christ as an aid to a sick world; and Sara Teasdale has been drawn closer to Him through her own and the world's distress; while Elinor Wylie had been only further impressed with the futility of existence; and Amy Lowell has expressed rebellion against the church and against God.

(5) Fatalism in The Minor Note We have discovered that three of the poets whom we have studied have connected fatalistic ideas with the idea of God in several instances; H.D., Carl Sandburg and Elinor Wylie.

(1) Sword Blades and Poppy Seed, The Last Quarter of the Moon, p. 68.



The following quotation is a good example of the trend of fatalism in the Minor Note of H.D.,

"the gods have invented  
curious torture for us.

----  
but the gods wanted you  
the gods wanted you back."

(1)

This poem is clear cut as far as its images are concerned, but blurred in its thought -- according to the characteristic treatment of the author. It may not be fatalistic after all!

Carl Sandburg says in Crap Shooters,

"They take it heaven's hereafter is an eternity  
of crap games---  
The spots on the dice are the music signs of  
the songs of heaven here.  
God is Luck: Luck is God: we are all bones the  
High Thrower rolled; some are two spots, some double  
sixes."

(2)

This is evidently part of his dissatisfaction with the world-- his impatience with people for their foolish way of grubbing at anything. But he is kicking up such a dust about it that it is difficult to see what he really thinks about God from what he says here. If we appraise it by <sup>the</sup> words themselves, it is rebellion against the idea of God.

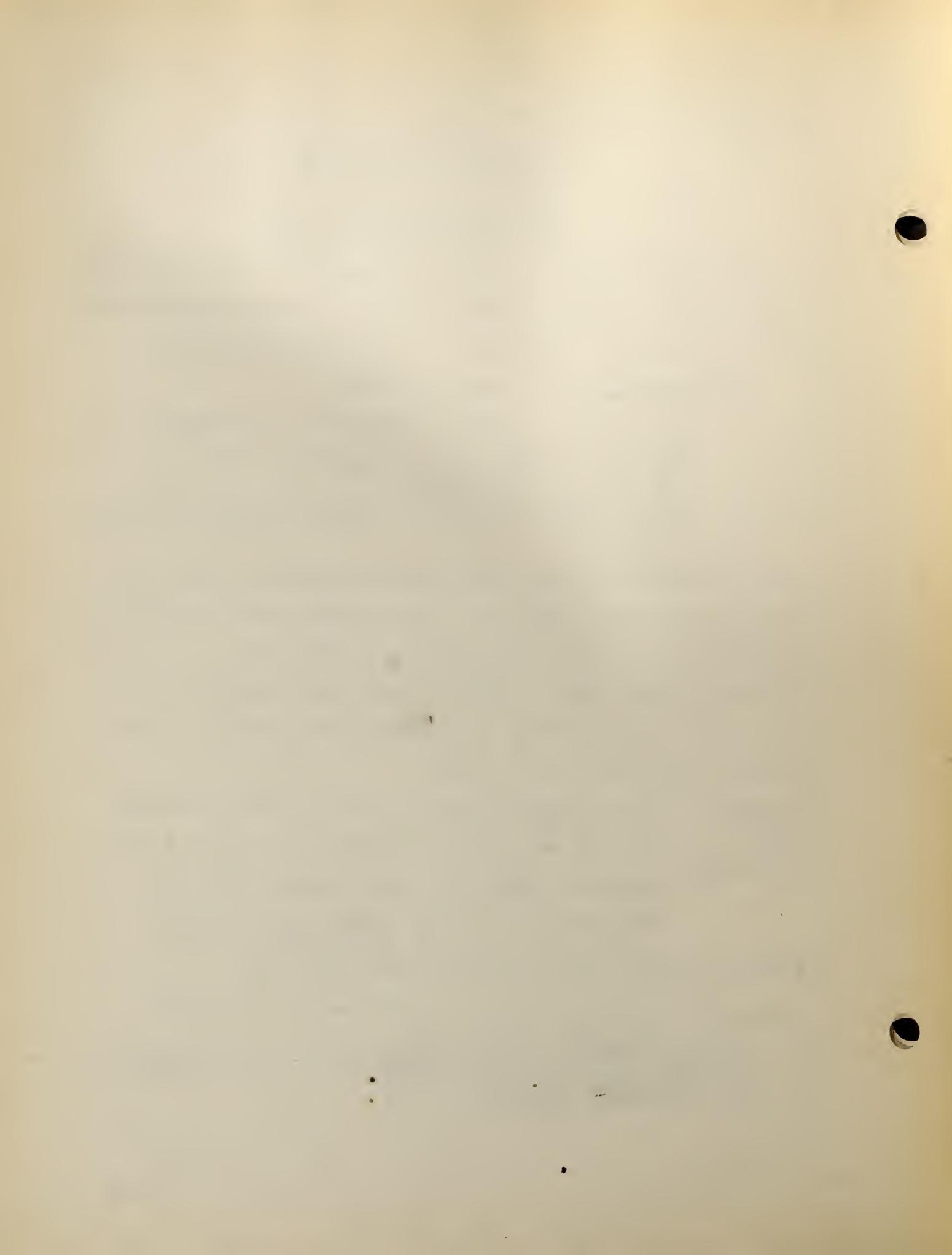
Fatalism Positive and Despairing	But in <u>Elinor Wylie's</u> poetry fatalism, together with its twin sister stoicism, may be said to be dominant. These two trends pervade even the titles of her volumes; <u>Black Armor</u> , <u>Trivial</u> <u>Breath</u> . The following quotations will illustrate:
---	--

(1) H.D., Sea Garden, Loss, p. 21.

See also Ibid., The Cliff Temple(II) p. 27; Prisoners, p. 36.

(2) Sandburg, Smoke and Steel, p. 34.

See also Ibid., Hoodlums, p. 108.



"I was being human born alone;  
 I am, being woman, hard beset:  
 I live by squeezing from a stone  
 The little nourishment I get."  
 (1)

The other quotation is from Hughie at the Inn. The author is rebuking Hughie, who has been taking long chances flinging the loaded dice. We feel that Hughie is Elinor Wylie herself, who has combatted enemies, taken great chances, and often won. But the dice are "loaded", and in the end Hughie is rebuked with:

"But no, but no, my lad;  
 'Tis cruel fate gone mad;  
 A stab in the back, a serpent in the breast;  
 And worst that murderer's best.  
 ----

Season your ale, now these long nights draw in,  
 With thoughts to save your skin:  
 Be provident, and pray for cowardice  
 And the loaded pair of dice."

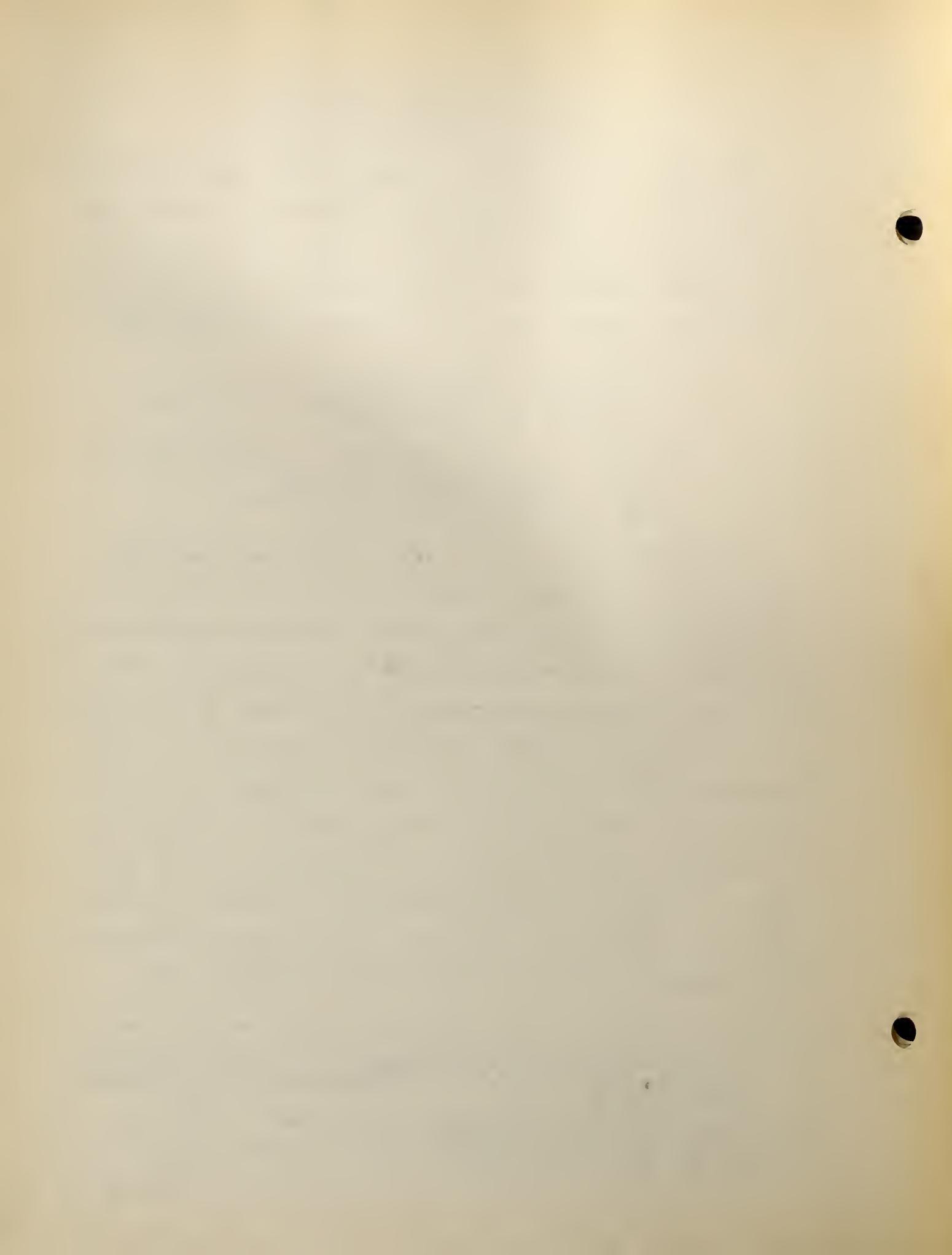
(2)

In fatalism set forth in words so filled with pessimism and despair as are these, the very absence of the idea of God is significant. And the force of this despairing fatalism carries more meaning than it would if it were not coupled with an almost utter lack of positive reference to Him elsewhere in her poetry.

(3)

Neither can her fatalism be given a proper place in this discussion without considering it also in conjunction with her belief in the spiritual nature of the universe, a strain which is in evidence not only in her, but in all of the twelve poets except T.S. Eliot. In this connection we will confine our discussion of this strain to the aspect of it which may be called the "Upward Urge", and also we will limit our material to the

- (1) Kreymborg, Our Singing Strength. p. 461.  
 See also, for stoicism, Wylie, Angels and Earthly Creatures, Sonnet (XVIII) p. 20.  
 And Monroe and H., The Eagle and the Mole, p. 599.
- (2) Angels and Earthly Creatures, p. 47.
- (3) We have discovered only two such references. They are listed under God as Love.



poetry of those whose references to God have been least positive; Carl Sandburg, Edna Millay, Amy Lowell, H.D., and Elinor Wylie.

(6) The Upward Urge With regard to H.D. I feel that her belief in the Upward Urge is her greatest utterance.

The Shrine conveys this idea of spiritual progress upward.

The speaker is watching over the sea, and this poem of four sections passes through skepticism, pessimism, doubt again, and then arrives finally in the fourth section here:

"But hail -  
As the tide slackens,  
As the wind beats out,  
We hail the shore -  
We sing to you,  
Spirit between the headlands  
And the further rocks.

Though the oak-beams split,

---  
Your eyes have pardoned our faults,  
Your hands have touched us;

---  
You have leaned forward a little  
And the waves can never thrust us back  
From the splendor of your ragged coast."

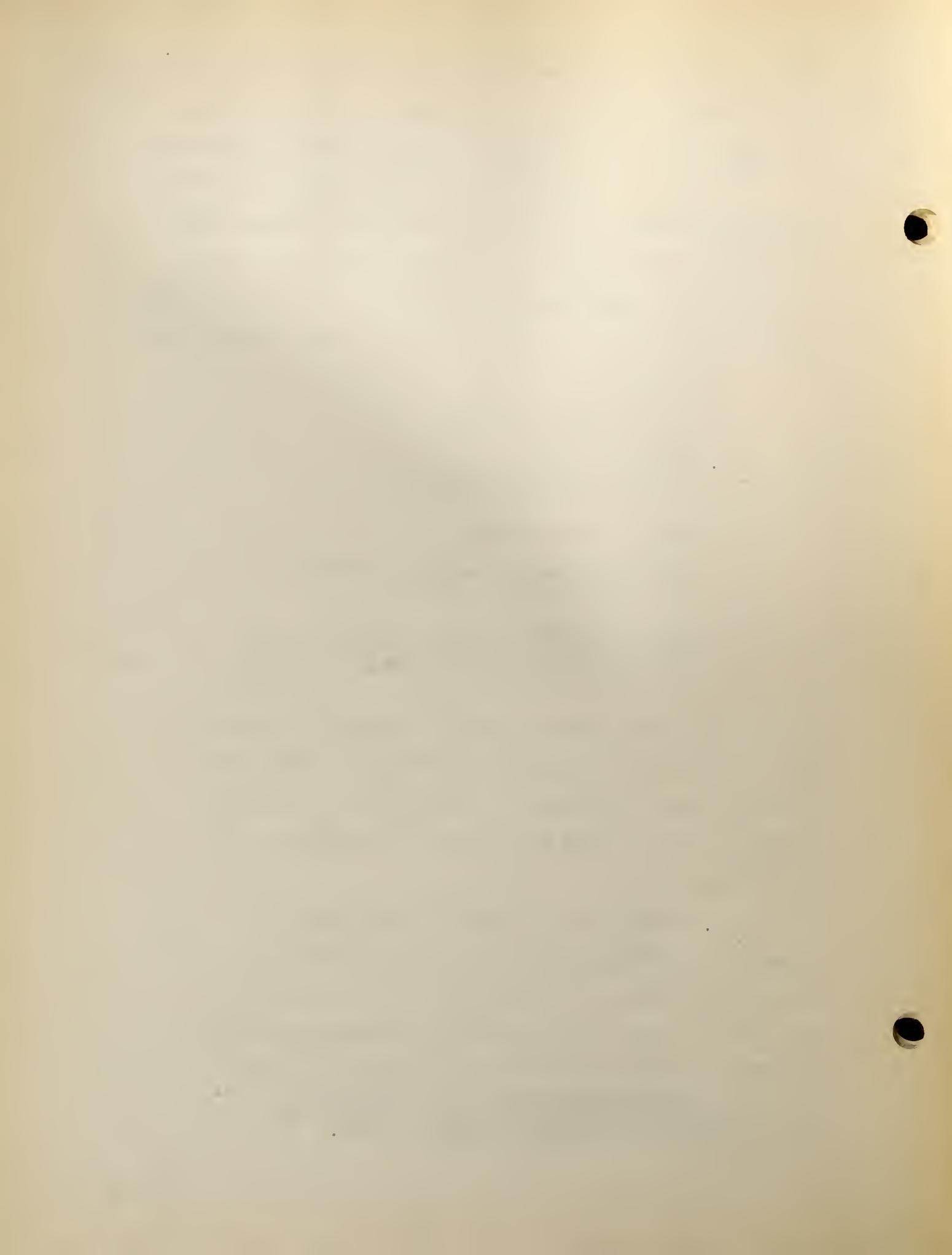
(1)

Here we have the idea of a spirit in the world which even reaches out its hands to man to help him in his battle against the waves, an idea that is certainly very much akin to the idea of God, if indeed it is not identical.

) And in regard to Amy Lowell, that genius of "amazing versatility" who lacked only something (2)  
important to say -- it is not at all to be wondered at that she also lacked positive utterance about the

(1) H.D., Monroe and Henderson, The Shrine, p. 98.  
See also Sea Garden, The Helmsman, p. 2.

(2) Kreymborg, Singing Strength, p. 354.



idea of God. Although in addition to this lack, her pessimism often leads her to rebellion against the idea of God, still she believes in the Upward Urge:

"Always we are following the light,  
Always the light recedes;

---

Its glowing flame would die if it were caught,  
Its value is that it doth always seem  
But just a little farther on."

(1)

Although Carl Sandburg's poetry is manifestly lacking in references to God, and although he often uses the name of the Deity in a manner that is close to an oath, and although his poetry carries a strong strain of pessimism, still these are all in some measure compensated for by a belief in the Upward Urge. This belief in the Upward Urge is so strong that it seems to elevate the whole of his poetry. To him the spirit force of the world works through people; and coupled with his love of humanity is a belief in Christ as humanity's Savior;

"painting on a slab of night a Christ's face--  
Slipping new brass keys into rusty iron locks  
and shouldering till at last the door  
gives and we are in a new room--"

(3)

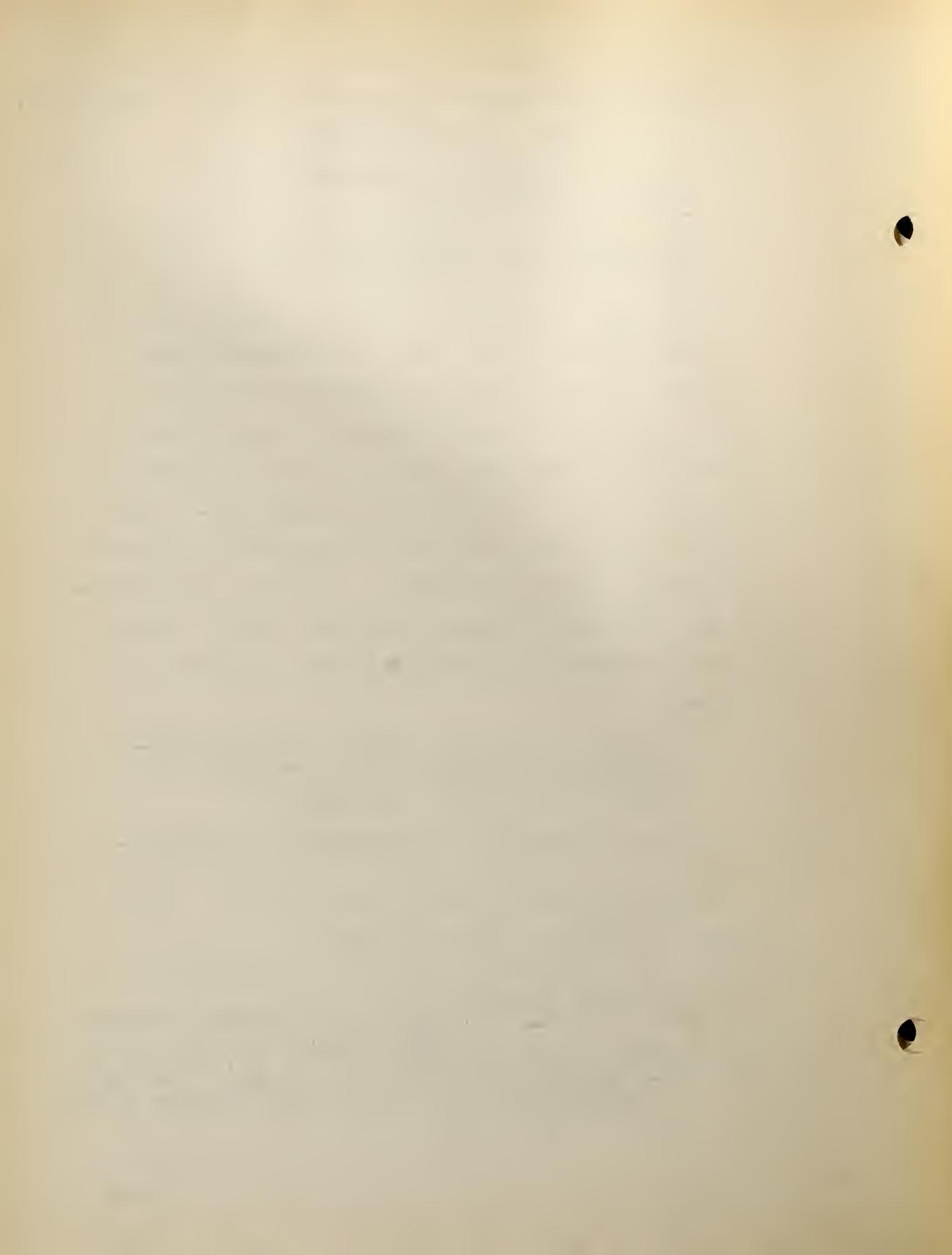
It does not seem that Carl Sandburg is disinterested in God, but rather that he is anxious that men's interpretation of Him shall be kept practical. He is himself in mystic communion with Him:

(1) Merrifield, The Lamp of Life, p. 47.

See also Untermyer, Modern American Poetry, Meeting House Hill, p. 208.

(2) Sandburg, Smoke and Steel, p.p. 80, 143, 148, 11, 21.

(3) Ibid., Brass Keys, p. 68; Flash Crimson, p. 83; The Sins of Kalamazoo, p. 53; Rusty Crimson, p. 239.



"Who knows what I know  
when I have asked the night"<sup>(1)</sup>

In the following quotation he shows us Sandburg the mystic, struggling to help people, believing in the Upward Urge, and interpreting it as God - a God working for the uplift of humanity through human service:

I have wanted kisses my heart stuttered at asking,  
I have bounded at useless doors and called my people  
fools,  
I have staggered alone in a winter dark making  
mumble songs  
to the sting of a blizzard that clutched  
and swore  
It was night in my blood:  
open dreaming night,  
night of tireless shee\_t-steel blue;  
The hands of God washing something,  
feet of God walking somewhere."<sup>(2)</sup>

The strain of the Upward Urge has always run through the poetry of Edna Millay, but it is often faint and always much less related to the idea of God than in the case of Carl Sandburg. The quotations from her poetry in our classification were few, though varied, but most of them were found in her earliest volume, with, perhaps, a slight return to reference to the idea of God in her latest one. Her intermediate work is dominated by introspection and pessimism. With her the belief in the Upward Urge does not seem to have any particular weight in the Minor Note.

(1) Ibid., p. 245. See also p. 93.

(2) Ibid., Night's Nothings Again, p. 249; See also Clean Curtains, p. 41.

(3) Millay, The Harp Weaver, n.p. 3, 29, 28.



On the other hand, in Elinor Wylie the Upward Urge seems to be a very positive note. To satisfy the urge of her spirit in its upward groping seems to be the great obligation of her life. She seems to feel that it surpasses everything else, especially ideals of morality, as is shown by the following quotation:

"Let not the heart's intention  
To be both brave and good  
Cheat that devoted engine  
Of spiritual food.

"Because it is not cruel,  
Because it is not great,  
Provide it fire, and fuel  
Sufficient for its state

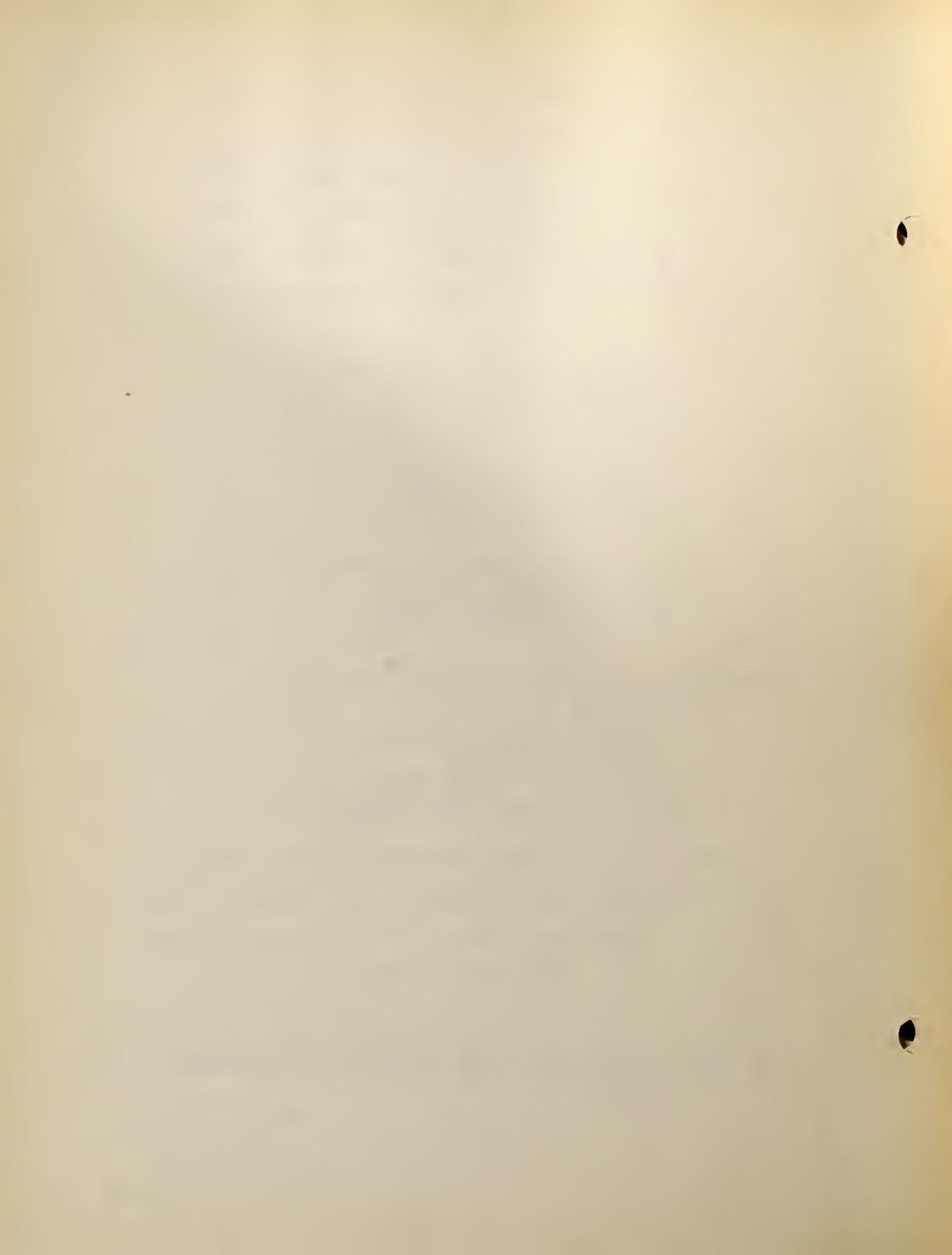
"Ah, poor machine and faithful,  
That limps without a wing!  
My love, be never wrathful  
With this imperfect thing."  
(1)

This idea is found again in the following,

"Although I love you well  
And shall forever love you,  
I set that archangel  
The depths of heaven above you;  
And I shall love you, keeping  
His word, and no more weeping."  
(2)

This intense belief in the Upward Urge combined with her seeming lack of belief in God, together with her astute intellectual ability, her fatalism, and her stoicism, make a combination of tremendous import.

(1) Wylie, Angels and Earthly Creatures, Bread Alone, p. 49.  
(2) Ibid., Love Song, p. 23.



With little accompanying belief that humanizes or socializes it --as I read her life, from the scant biographical material that I can discover--the Upward Urge becomes a wild thing, tending I know not whither. I do not find that in her it has contributed to the idea of God.

(a) Summary  
of the Upward  
Urge.

We have discovered, then, that the Upward Urge is an idea that leads sometimes, but not always, toward the idea of God. We have discussed it in the case of the five poets in whom the idea of God was found to be the least positive. In three of them it has contributed a little to the idea that they present; i. e. in H.D., Amy Lowell, and especially in Carl Sandburg. But in Elinor Wylie it has appeared to strengthen her fatalism and her separation from God.

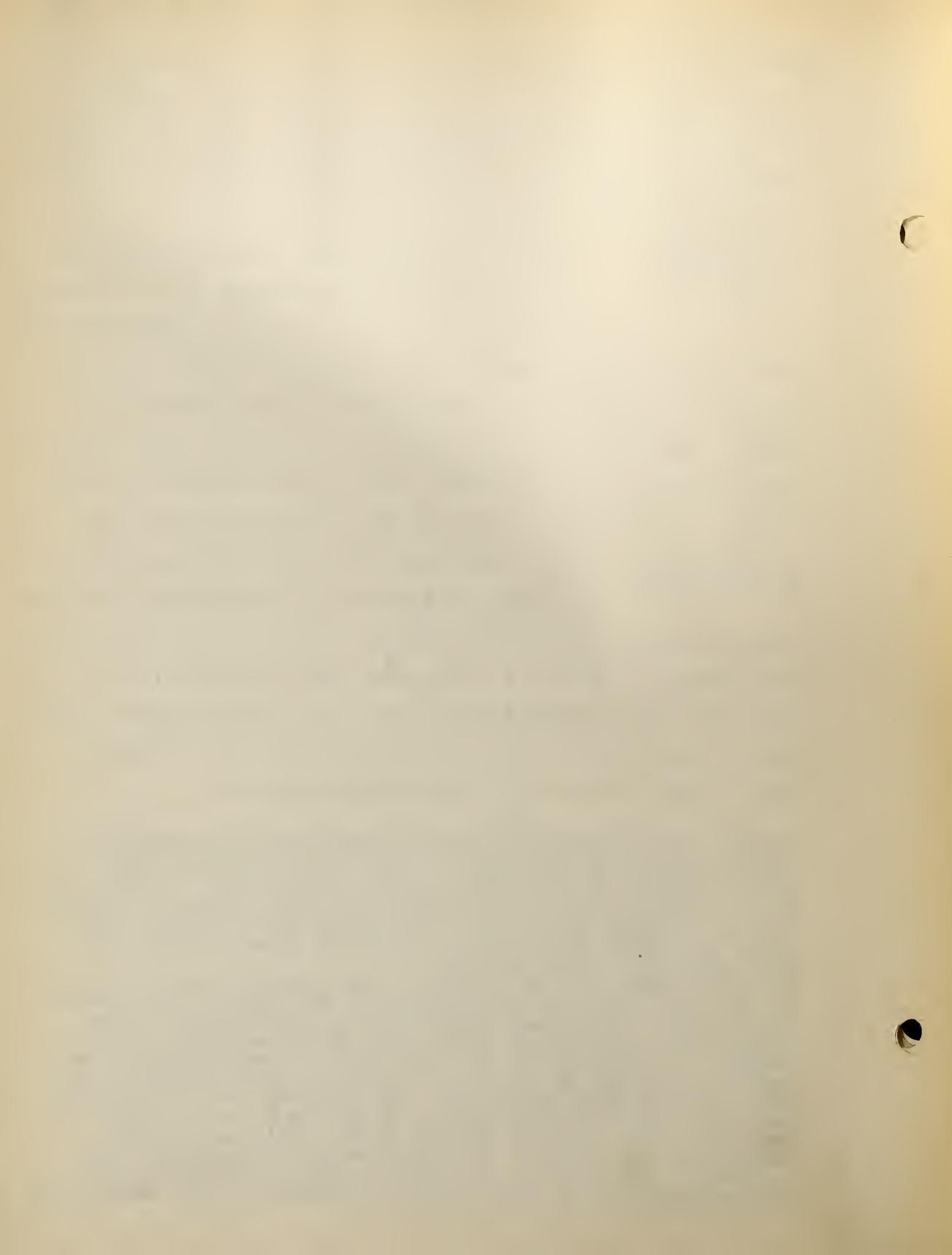
e. Summary of  
The Minor Note.

We have considered the various strains of the Minor Note in the work of the poets most affected by it, and have found various changes in the idea of God that each poet presents. This is a complicated body of material, and so, in order that these slight changes, noted in so many different places, may be seen in their proper relation, I submit for a summary of the Minor Note the chart on the following page.  
(2)

---

(1) The exact philosophical meaning of the different strains taken up under the Minor Note, we have not considered within the province of this thesis. We have merely tried to relate each trend to whatever idea of God the poet's work may show. Another subject worthy of note and not treated by us is the fact that all of the women that we have happened to choose show the Minor Note much more than do the men.

(2) At the left will be found a column, running from "Theism" at the top of the page to "Atheism" at the bottom, with a region in the middle of the page indicating "no presentation of the idea of God." The initial position at which the poet's line is placed is a relative one, arrived at by a consideration of the number of references to the idea of God previously recorded plus the nature of those references. The movement from left to right has, of course, no chronological significance. A horizontal movement in the line indicates that the poet's work is not affected by that strain. The relative position of the final location in the scale at the right is then considered to show more accurately each poet's total presentation of the idea of God.



## Summary of the Minor Note

Top of Chart  
(right)

THEISM		atheism				ATHESIM	
Poet	Paganism	Materialism	Scepticism	Pessimism	Fatassim	Rebelition v.s. Idea of God	I.e. God as opposite of Love etc.
S. Teasdale							The idea of God in the categories of page 32
E. Mississay							
C. Sandburg							
E. Wylie							
H. D.							
A. Alcott							
T. S. Eliot							

No Present  
tion  
of Idea of God

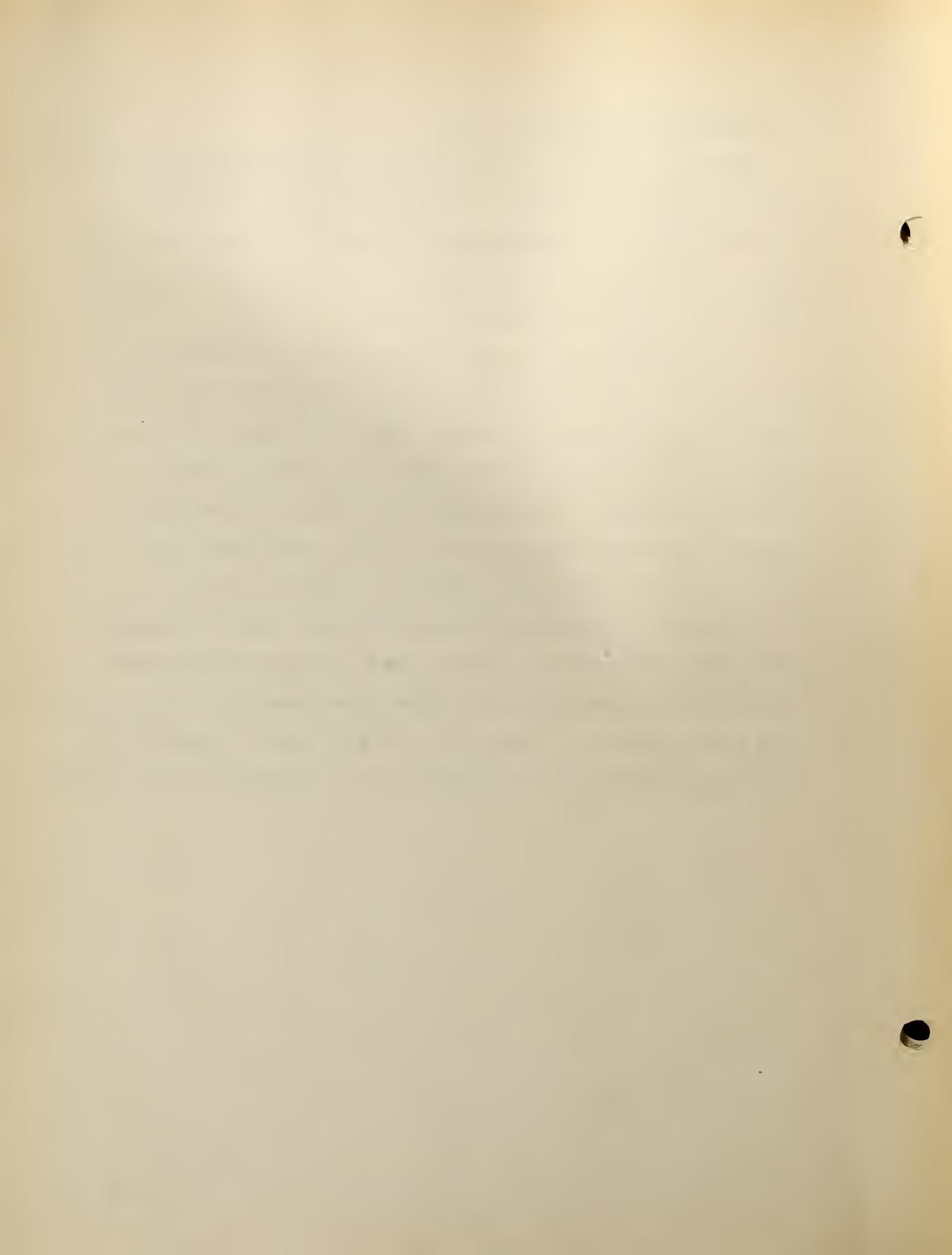


#### 8. SUMMARY OF THE IDEA OF GOD

The idea of God in this body of poetry has been given varied expression which is found in considerable quantity. But the bulk of the references have come from six of the poets: Mr. Robinson, Joyce Kilmer, Vachel Lindsay, Robert Frost, E.L. Masters, and Sara Teasdale.

On the whole, the positive references to the idea of God which have been found show that Will and Truth are the least frequent aspects presented, and that these poets more generally refer to Him as Love than in any other aspect. The largest number of references fell under the heading of Creator, although here about half of the quotations were from two of the poets, Joyce Kilmer and Vachel Lindsay.

Through the considerations of the Minor Note we found that, among the six poets who have not made much reference to the idea of God, there are three whose work shows considerable disintegration in regard to it; Amy Lowell, Elinor Wylie, and complete lack and disintegration in the case of T.S. Eliot.

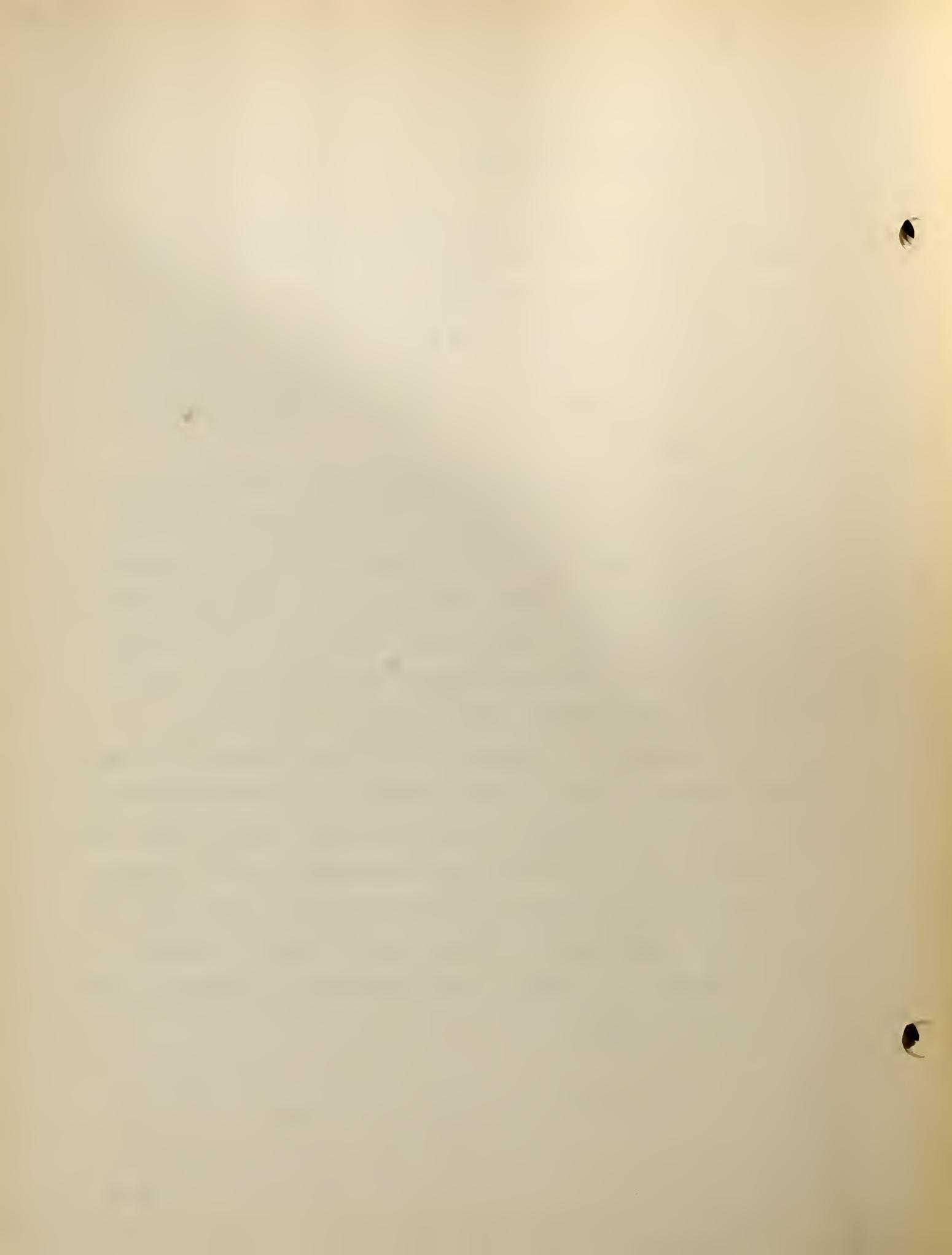


### C. CONCLUSION OF THE THESIS

Our investigation of the idea of God in these twelve representative, modern American poets has disclosed that only six of them show a well-rounded, positive idea of God, and also that there is much in this body of poetry that tends toward its disintegration. One poet's entire poetic work depicts chaos rather than God, and that of two others tends in that direction.

And yet, on the whole the references to the idea of God are varied and numerous among the six who refer to Him most frequently. When they have presented Him we have discovered that they have done so in a manner that satisfies the emotions, but not the intellect; and, on the other hand, that the poet whose work shows the surest lack of the idea of God, Elinor Wylie, has a keen intellectual content in her writing.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the only poet in the entire group in whose poetry is shown a sufficiently intellectual approach to the idea of God to have any weight against such a negative strain as Elinor Wylie represents, is Mr. Robinson. He alone has presented God as a spirit force in the world, in every one of the aspects in which any of these poets have presented Him, and also as a unifying principle, working in and throughout the world.



## SUMMARY OF THE THESIS:

A STUDY OF THE IDEA OF GOD AS  
FOUND IN THE POETRY  
OF CERTAIN MODERN AMERICAN POETS

We have undertaken the study of the idea of God as found in the poetry of certain modern American poets, and therefore we have selected the following poets, and have noted a few reasons for considering their poetry as representative of our present-day poetry in general:

- |                   |                    |                   |                  |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. E.A. Robinson, | 4. Vachel Lindsay, | 7. Sara Teasdale, | 10. Joyce Kilmer |
| 2. Robert Frost,  | 5. Carl Sandburg,  | 8. Edna Millay,   | 11. H. D.        |
| 3. Amy Lowell,    | 6. E. L. Masters,  | 9. Elinor Wylie,  | 12. T. S. Eliot  |

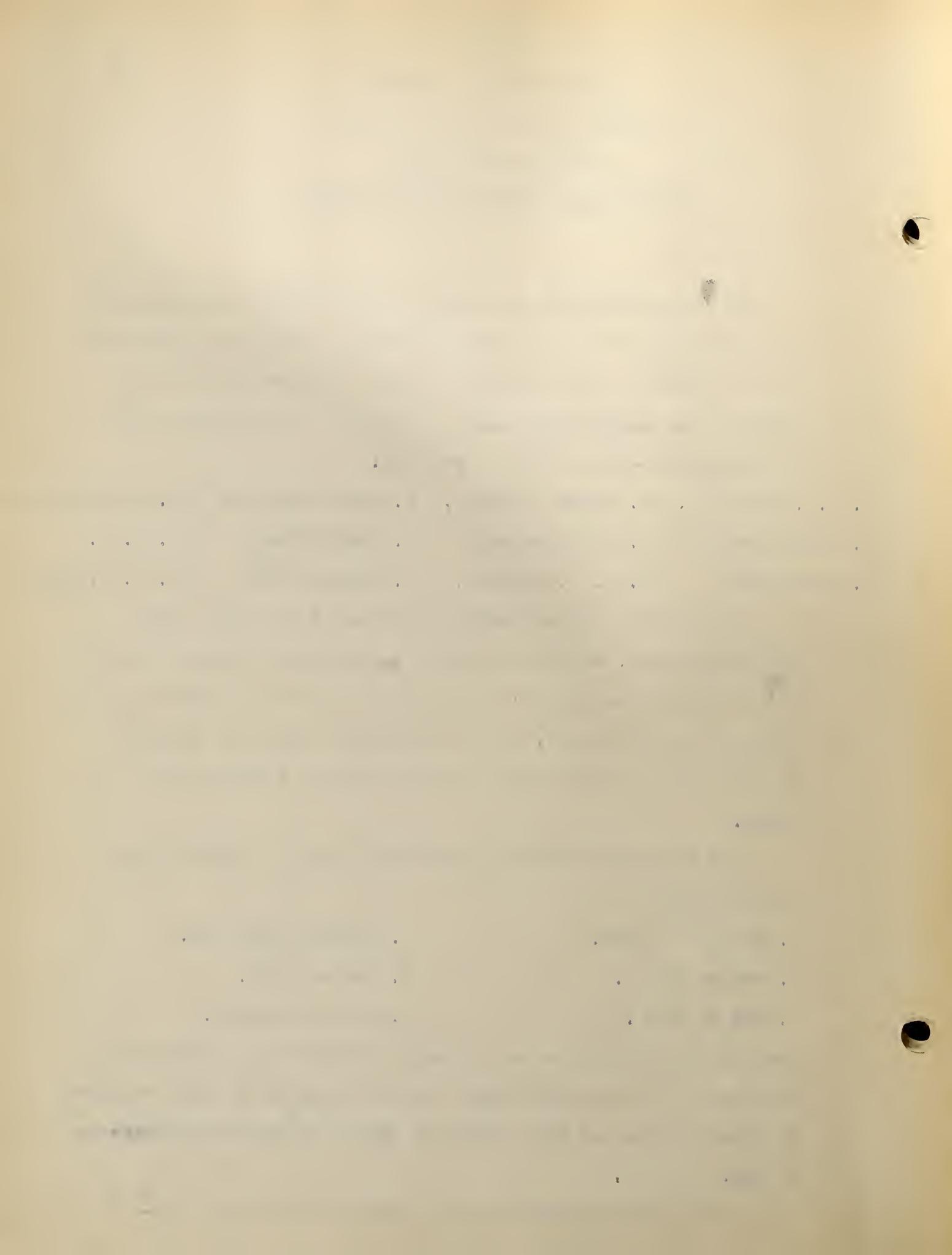
To the end of discovering the idea of God that their poetry contains, we have searched through the volumes that we have been able to secure; the collected works of those who have published such volumes, and a sufficient number of volumes of the others to feel that the voice of the poet has been heard.

The references secured have then been classified under the headings:

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Beauty and God. | 4. Goodness and God. |
| 2. God as Truth.   | 5. God as Love.      |
| 3. God as Will.    | 6. God as Creator.   |

Then the findings have been considered and it was found that Will and Truth were the least frequent aspects of God presented by these poets, and that Love was the most general expression of Him.

It was also discovered that, while there was a con-



siderable number of references under all the different headings, and while no important aspect of God seemed to be missing, still there were certain recurrent strains in this body of poetry that would seem to indicate less assurance in regard to the idea of God than the references themselves would suggest.

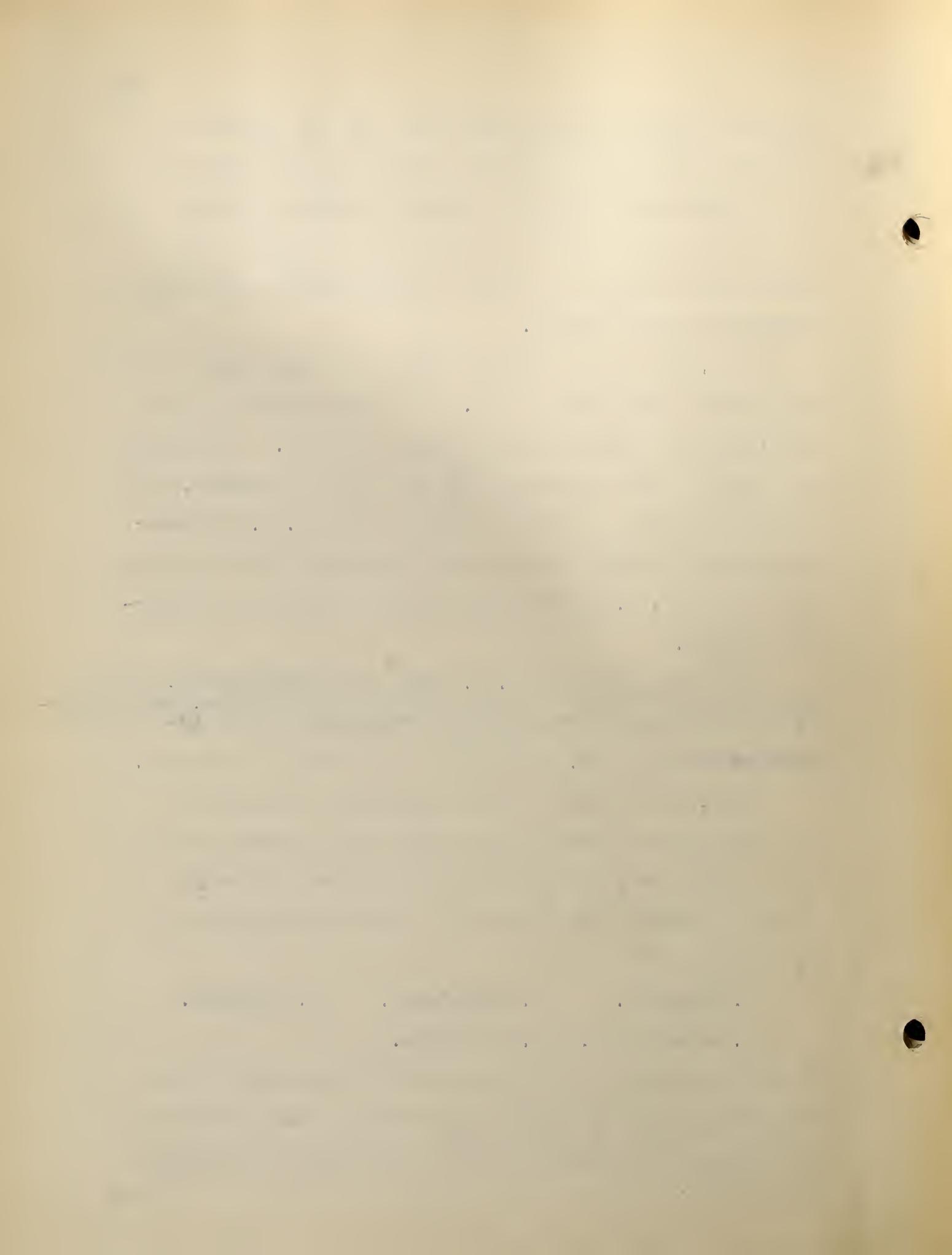
Then, for lack of a better name, we called these strains collectively the "Minor Note". We then proceeded to try to discover in which poets the Minor Note lay. The poetry of three of them seemed entirely free from it; namely, that of Vachel Lindsay, of Joyce Kilmer, and of E. A. Robinson; while that of Robert Frost seemed practically free from it, and that of E. L. Masters seemed not to contain a considerable amount.

Next, the poetry of T. S. Eliot was considered separately, because of its unusual nature, its uncertain meaning, and also because of the fact that all of his references to the idea of God were opposite to the meanings of our theistic categories.

Then, the idea of God as found in the poetry of the remaining six poets (a group found to be made up of all of the five women and Carl Sandburg) was discussed under the head of the Minor Note, from the standpoints of the strains of:

- 1. Paganism.      3. Skepticism.      5. Fatalism.
- 2. Materialism.    4. Pessimism.

In this discussion of the Minor Note we considered these recurrent strains in order to see whether they added to or detracted from the utterance of the poet concerning the idea of God.

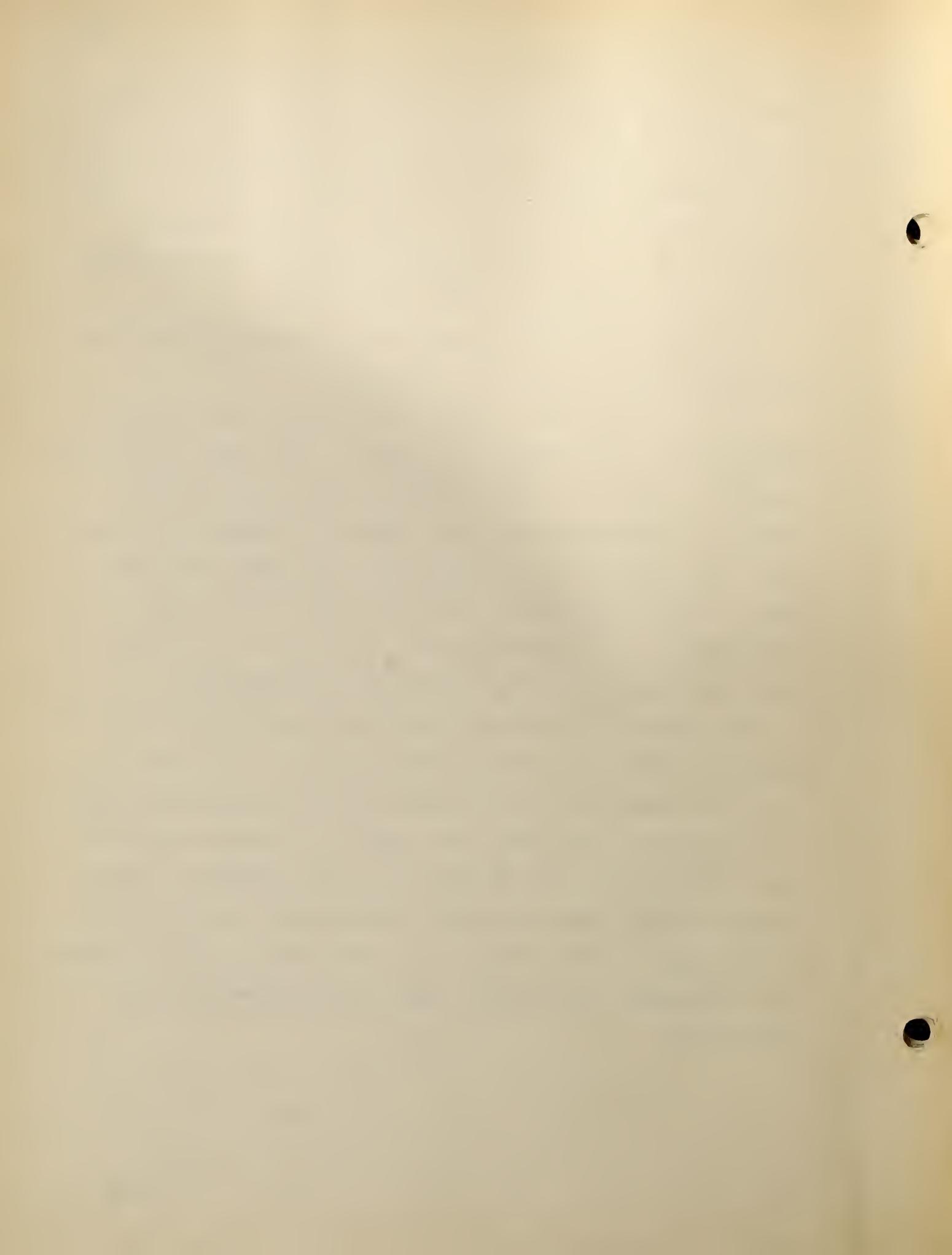


It was then discovered that another factor entered in, that of the recurrent idea of spiritual progress in the world. This idea we called the "Upward Urge", and proceeded to discuss it in the case of these six poets except Sara Teasdale (in whom it did not seem to be a factor). This we did to discover whether or not these poets have said something about Him even at times when they have not called Him by name.

The results of this investigation of the Minor Note plus the Upward Urge is summarized as follows:

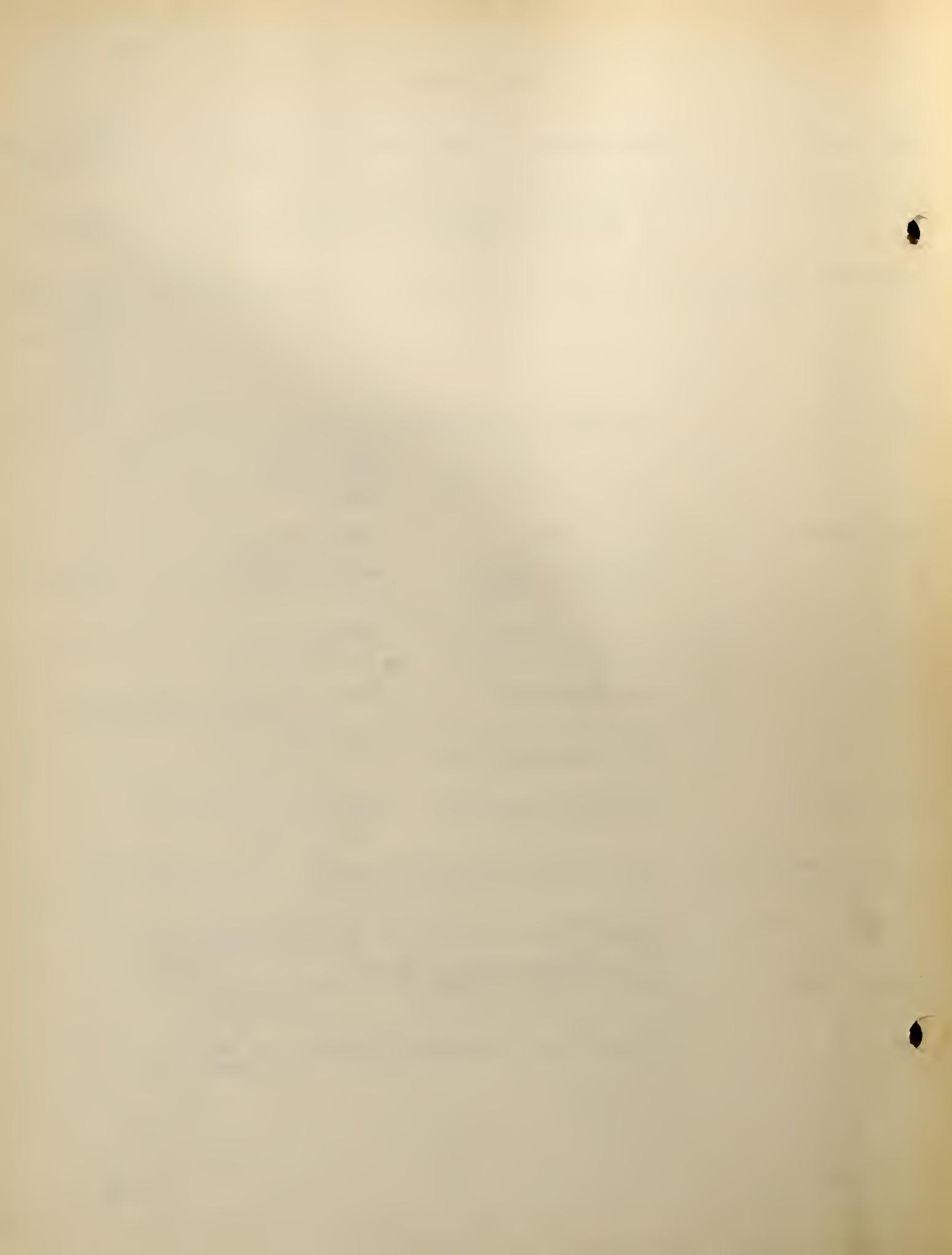
In the case of Sara Teasdale these strains lead to more rather than to less certainty in regard to the idea of God; H.D. expresses a belief in a spirit force in the world somewhat similar to the idea of God; Carl Sandburg's belief in humanity and in the glory of service guides his pessimism toward the idea of God; in Edna Millay the idea of God is but little influenced by these strains; while in Amy Lowell and Elinor Wylie they lead the idea of God toward disintegration.

The conclusion is, then, that while the references to the idea of God in the work of these poets as a whole are varied and numerous, still the bulk of the positive note comes from only six of the poets; and, while the remaining six have said a little more about Him than the direct references would indicate, still, there are three poets in whose work the idea of God tends toward disintegration. Only one poet, Mr. Robinson, has a thoroughly well-rounded intellectual approach to the idea of God.

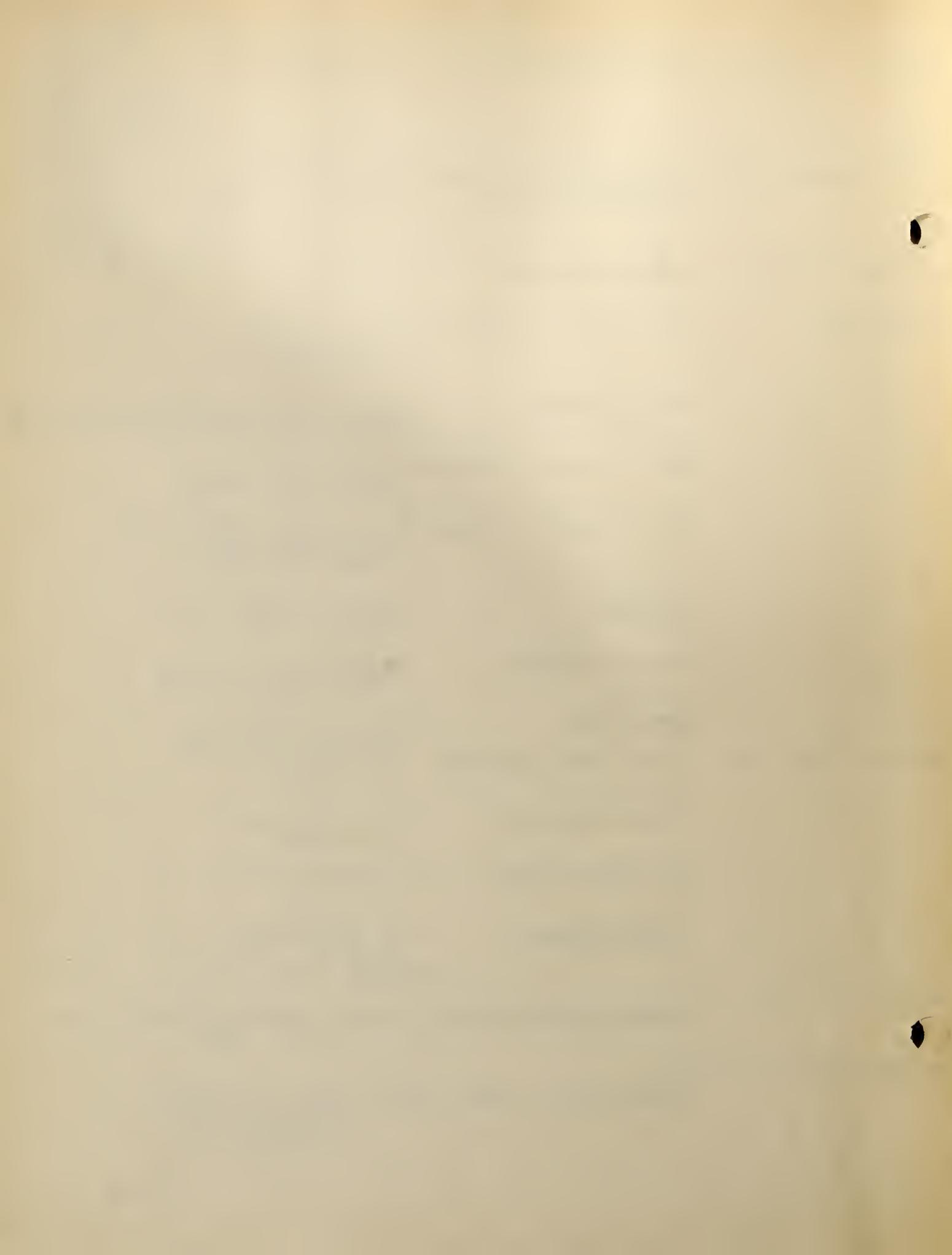


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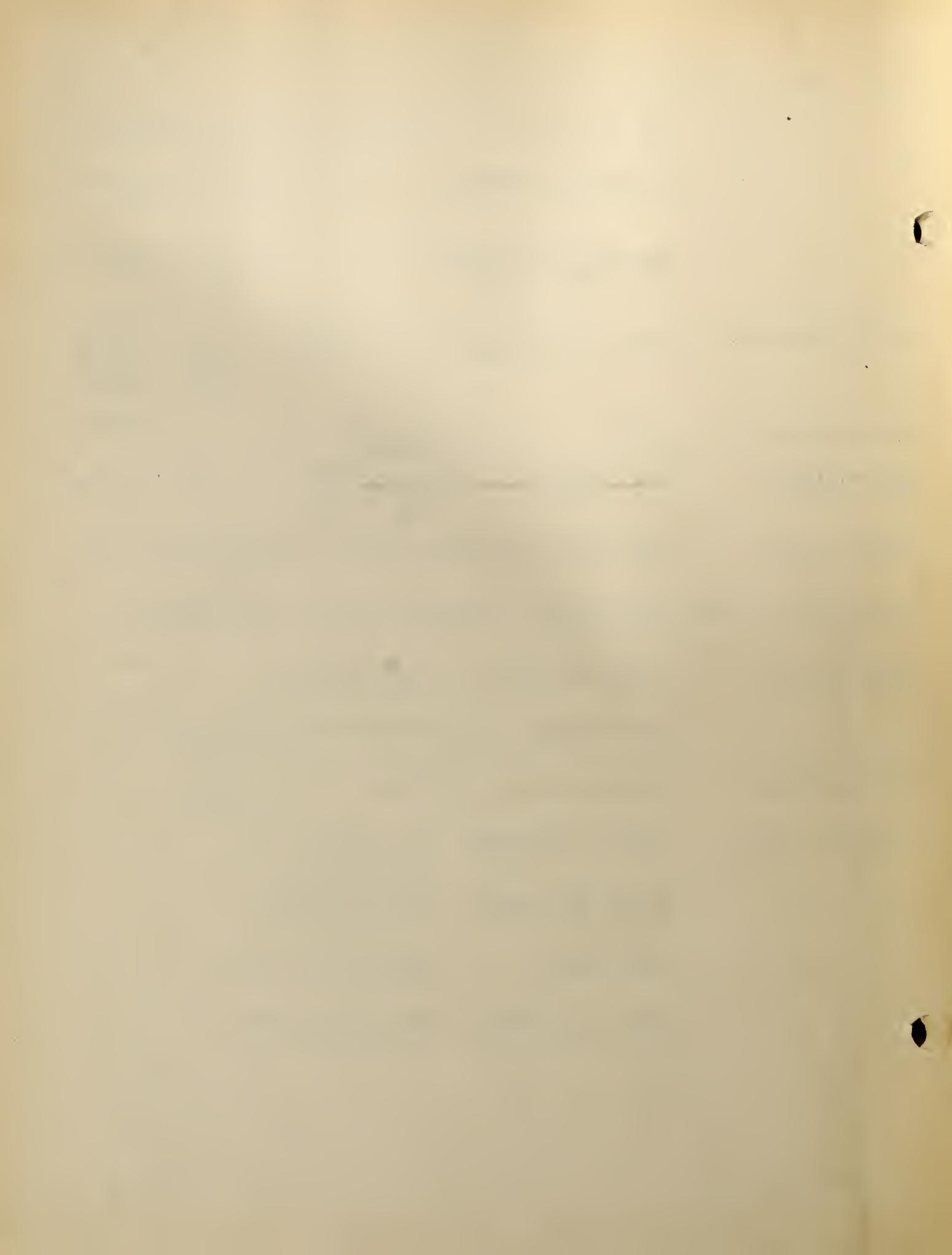
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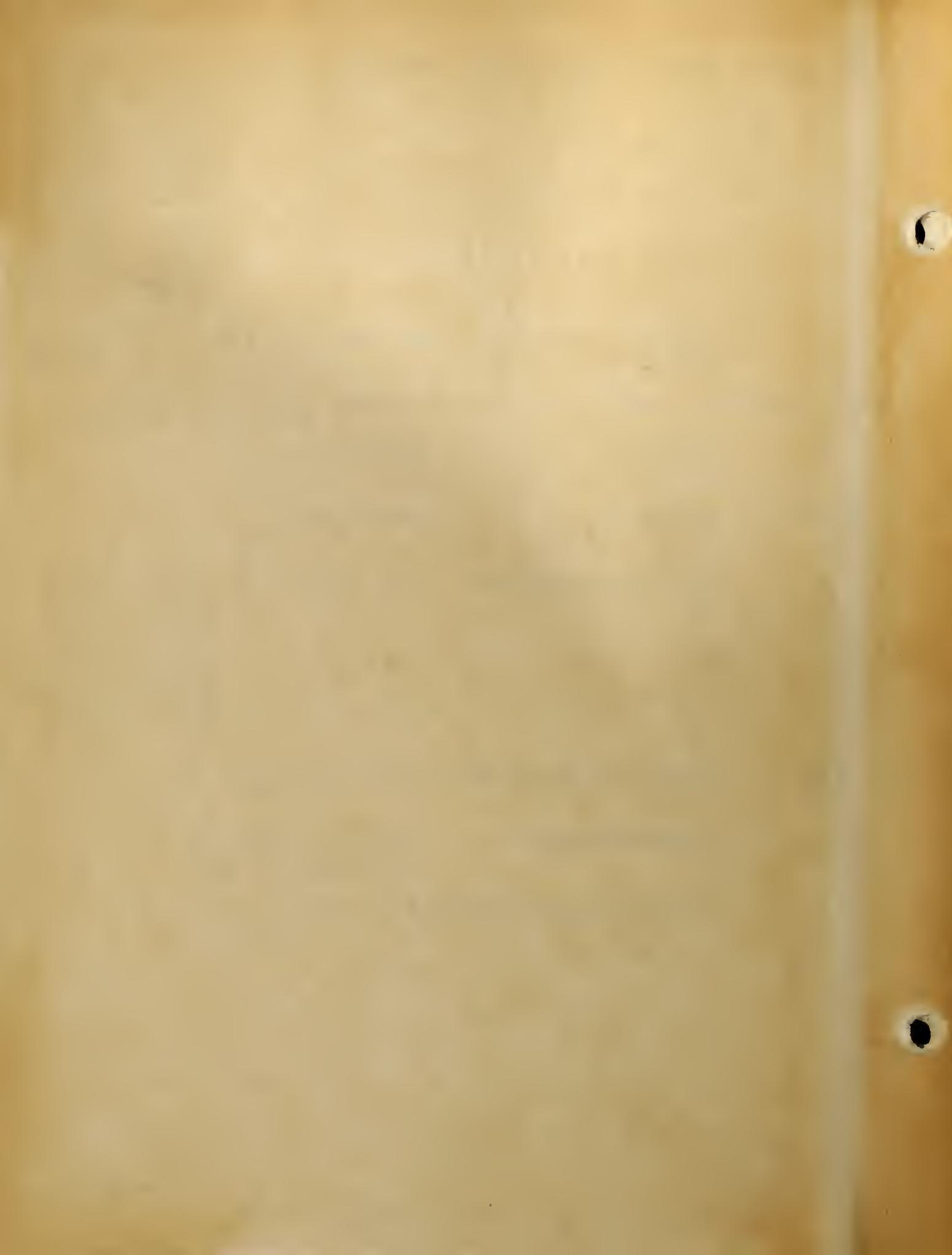
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